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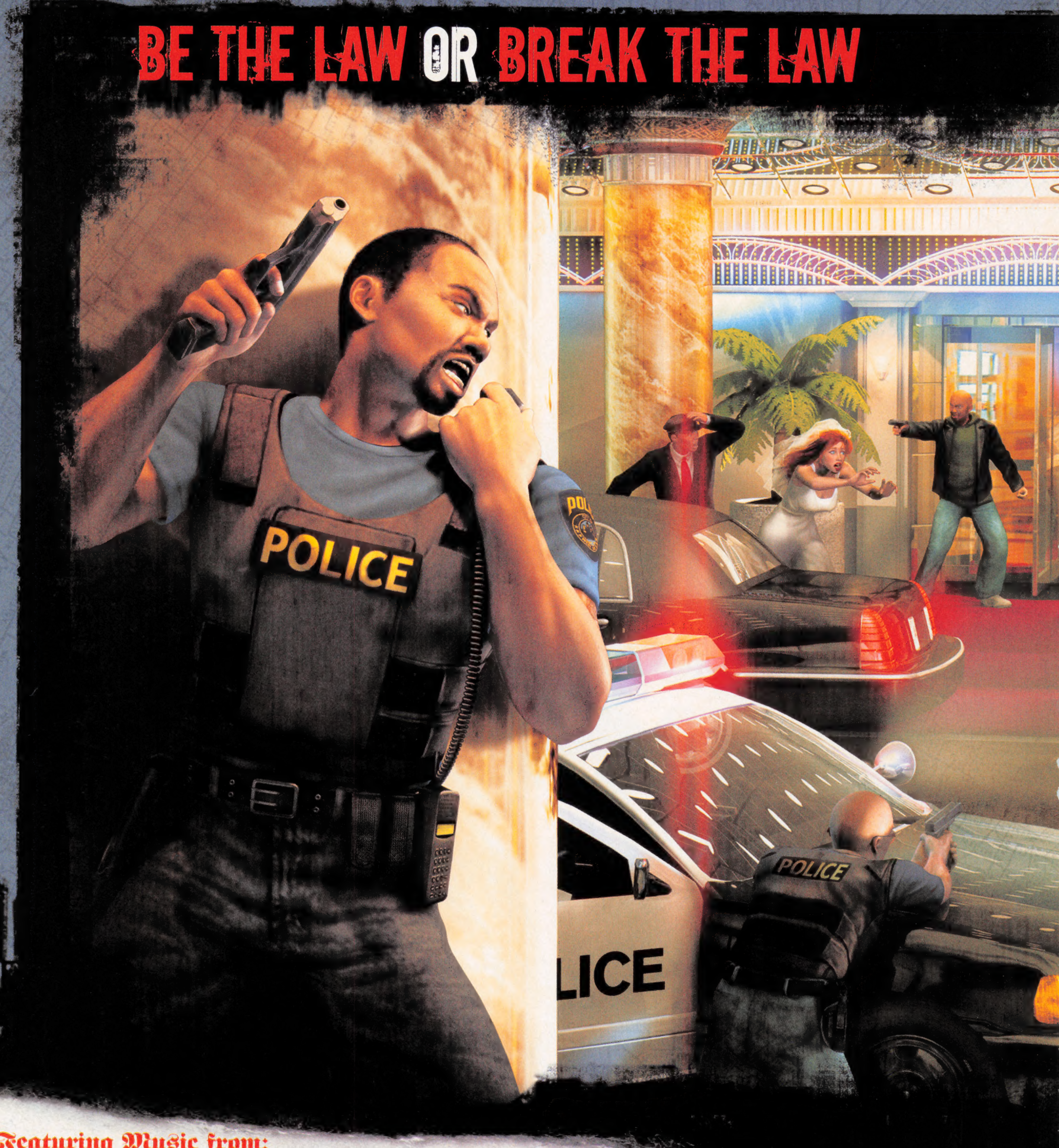
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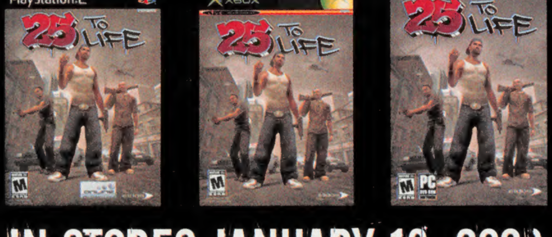
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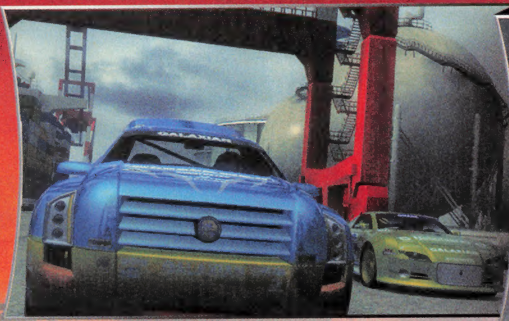

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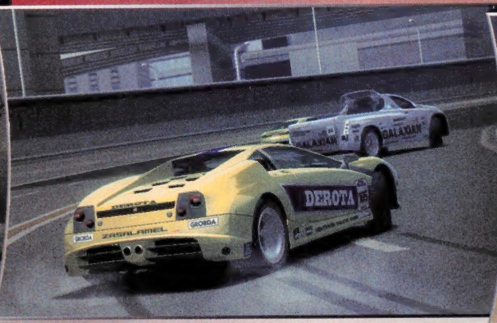

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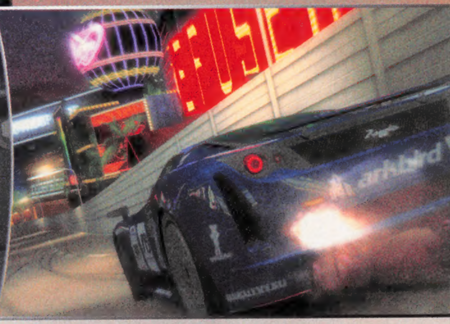

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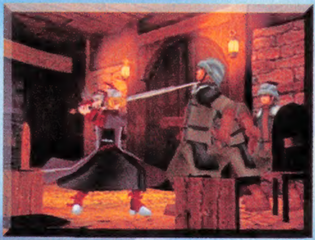

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THE TOP 200 GAMES OF THEIR TIME

We've given blood, sweat, tears, yea our very souls to gather together this definitive list of the 200 best titles in gaming history

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EDITORIAL

You'd think after 199 issues and two Top 100 Games lists, we'd have our s*** together. But nope. Screaming, cursing, hair pulling, eyeball gouging...and that's just *EGM* on normal deadlines. Throw in a few supernova discussions about what were the best 200 games of their time, and—well, it'd be illegal in 43 countries for me to describe what went down in those meetings. You know, Geneva Conventions and all....

Part of the problem, naturally, is every editor working here has a different idea of what was a great game at the time. Some thought *Panzer Dragoon Saga* was a much better game than *Final Fantasy VII* (relative to when they were released); others didn't agree. *Pong*: Should that get the automatic No. 1 spot because it was pretty much the only game in town at the time? Or did other games make bigger impacts later? What multiplayer games absorbed our lives more? *Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow, Tetris Attack, Halo, Halo 2, Super Bomberman, GoldenEye 007*...? Do we have enough perspective on newer games like *Guitar Hero* or *Resident Evil 4* to put them on our list?

Great, now I have a headache just thinking about all the stuff we had to think about when we first put this list together. But it was all worth it—it took a while and cost us dearly, but we have our **Top 200 Games of Their Time** all ready for you. We one (hundred) upped our previous Top 100 lists with a new spin (the whole "of their time" thing versus our old lists of games we would still enjoy today), quotes from all over the industry, and of course, the extra 100 games. Naturally, any list like this is bound to cause controversy, because no one out there will 100 percent agree with us, no matter what order we put these games in. So, you have several outlets for your frustration: our letters mailbox (no explosives or diseased powder, please), egm.1UP.com (where you'll get to nominate games that we may have missed, then see the Top 25 vote getters), and throwing some plates at a brick wall (or counting slowly to 200, if that works better for ya).

Whew. See you in Issue #201. —*Editor-in-Chief, Dan "Shoe" Hsu*

ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY
THE GREATEST 200 GAMES OF THEIR TIME

■ Cover illustrator Vincent S. Proce rocked all four of our collector's edition covers, which join end to end to form one long, butt-kicking scene. Note: Because we had to assign this cover-art project months in advance, the characters on the cover may not be represented in the Top 200 list. We didn't have our list finalized at the time, so we just had Vincent draw historically significant game characters, period.

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retro letters

giant controllers, dropouts, and evil gross games

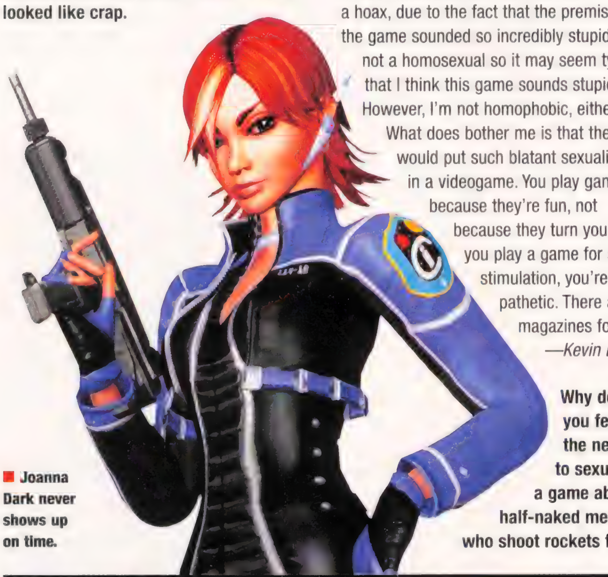
We interrupt this Letters section to bring you old *EGM* letters, reanswered for our 200th issue. Do not be alarmed. We'll resume reading the mail from our friends in the pen next month.

Perfect Dark delayed again

I am writing to your magazine because I just found out about the April 2000 delay of *Perfect Dark*. I couldn't even wait for December to come around and buy the game, but instead Nintendo had to delay it. Don't get me wrong; I would rather have a good/delayed game than a game that has flaws in it because the development team rushed it. But by the time *Perfect Dark* is out, the Nintendo 64 is going to look really dated compared to the other systems out there.

—Matt Holt

Sure, *Perfect Dark* ain't the prettiest thing on the Xbox 360, but if you can get past the weird shine, the cheesy characters, and the...oh, the first one? Yeah, it looked like crap.



■ Joanna Dark never shows up on time.

LETTER OF THE MONTH

Mortal Kombat did hurt kids

I love *Mortal Kombat*. *Mortal Kombat* is my life! I love to go to the arcade and play all day long. My favorite character is Sonya because she's a girl. Once, when I was playing *Mortal Kombat*, I said "Hi" to this girl. She hit me. I used to do drugs, but I don't have time for them anymore because I play *Mortal Kombat* now. I figured out all the fatalities myself! When the arcade closes and I go home, my mother says I should "fatality" myself because I'm failing in high school. Ha! She doesn't know that I quit high school so that I could play *Mortal Kombat* more. I figured out this new fatality with Scorpion where he rips your eyeballs out and eats them. I want to be a policeman so I can do that to people.

—Illegible name

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ARCADE EDITION

Thanks for your comments. Your illegible name and decade-old address mean you won't be winning a game. But please, enjoy this box art.

Brother bashing

In *EGM*, I've noticed references to a game called *Choaniki: Great Brother*. I'm still having trouble convincing myself this wasn't a hoax, due to the fact that the premise of the game sounded so incredibly stupid. I'm not a homosexual so it may seem typical that I think this game sounds stupid. However, I'm not homophobic, either. What does bother me is that they would put such blatant sexuality in a videogame. You play games because they're fun, not because they turn you on. If you play a game for sexual stimulation, you're pretty pathetic. There are magazines for that.

—Kevin Brazee

Why do you feel the need to sexualize a game about half-naked men who shoot rockets from their crotches and dry hump each other? It's Japanese. They can be weird.

Compatibility issues

I thought your article on the 16-bit systems (*EGM* #4) was awesome! I have a question about the TurboGrafx-16 machine. You said it used cards similar to the Sega Master System's cards. Since they are close to identical, could you play Sega cards on the TurboGrafx or vice versa?

—Joe Neikirk

Yeah, totally. Also, you can plug your American appliances right into European wall sockets, margarine tastes just like butter, and the *True Crime* series is on par with *Grand Theft Auto*.

Pokémaniac finally honored

I was very disappointed with your *Pokémon* aptitude test in Issue #124. All I had to do was simply say that I don't wear Pokémaniac underwear and, poof, I'm not a Pokémaniac. That is 100 percent bullshiznit. I can sing the whole Pokérap, name all 151 Pokémon in less than a minute, and I'm known for running around and throwing my poor little dog on my friends and bellowing "Growlithe gooooo!" (I know, it's sad.) Your *Pokémon* test was as inaccurate as they come.

—Elmo18497

The Correspondence Night School of Pokémon Studies hereby awards the retroactive status of "Pokémaniac" to the obviously dedicated trainer Elmo18497. ➤

■ If this man isn't a Pokémaniac, then who, pray tell, is?

POST OFFICE

Rambling and ranting from our message boards, **boards.1UP.com** (look for *Electronic Gaming Monthly*'s forums)

Asteroids or *Space Invaders*?

RTL3: The one with the spaceship.

PIG_ver_3: Those games are old! Next thing we know, you'll be asking, "Who was around when polio was finally eradicated?"

END3R: In *Space Invaders*, you actually kill stuff, right? Killing versus nonkilling... yeah, *Space Invaders*.

Ozcatter: *Space Invaders*. Nothing's better than a roll of quarters, a 2 liter of Shasta, and my Rush mix tape.

DTJAAAAMJSLM: *Space Invaders*. *Asteroids* is too nonlinear!

Viewdrix: *Galaga*. Duh.

Meta_Knight: Godspeed, crew of the *SS Triangle*.

TemplePilot: *Space Invaders*. I simply thought the narrative was stronger.

NeoMaximum: WTF are those games?

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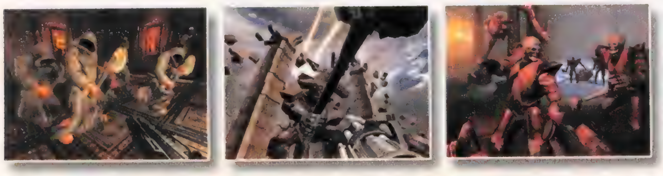

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BONUS GALLERY

Going the extra mile for love of the game

Give Us the Tingle

You know that outfit, that hard-rockin' goatee, and that pudgy belly. The multiple cans of Silly String in his backpack and the all-access pass around his neck let you know he's ready to party. Yes, as seen in the pages of just about every issue of *EGM* this year, this unabashed *Zelda* fan is a rising star in the gaming world—and we want to talk to him! So if you know him, or if you are him, please contact *EGM* Senior Editor Crispin Boyer at crispin_boyer@ziffdavis.com. Pronto!

If she thought the *Spawn* ad was "evil gross," Mrs. Stewart should have seen this.

Don't kill the thrill

I just found out that *Thrill Kill* won't reach store shelves because publisher EA won't release it. Now, I don't know about anyone else, but I don't want someone deciding for me what I can and can't play. Is this not what they made ratings for? If a child gets a copy of these types of games, then some parents are not doing their jobs. But don't decide for us (adults) what we can and can't play.

—*Kevin Newell*

We're with you, Kevin. Hey, EA: Grow some stones and bring out *Thrill Kill* for the PS1. The world is finally ready for it.

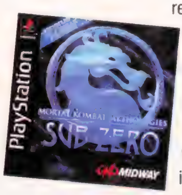
Sushi-X in Gitmo

Does Sushi-X really run around in his ninja outfit all the time?

—*Chad*

Yes, Sushi always wore his full ninja outfit, and it was a great joke until a fateful late-night deadline session in 2002 stopped the laughter forever. Sushi, decked head-to-toe in black ninja threads, stepped out to grab a burger. Unfortunately, a CIA antiterror task force raided the burger joint, taking Sushi—presumed a jihadist—into custody. He's been held at Guantanamo to this day, and while we're sure he can handle physical torture, we've received word that interrogators regularly flush copies of *Street Fighter II: Turbo* down the toilet in his presence. Stay strong, Sushi!

Absolute zero



I just rented *Mortal Kombat Mythologies* for the PlayStation, and I would like to point out a serious mistake in the instruction manual. The items section mentioned that "Sub-Zero is able to generate ice as cold at minus 500 degrees Fahrenheit by absorbing the surrounding air."

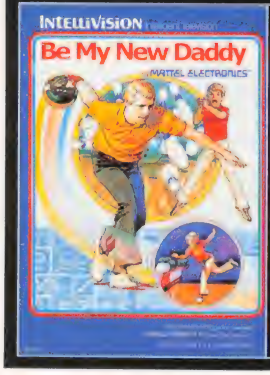
I would like to point out that this isn't possible. Absolute zero is defined as "the lowest theoretical temperature a gas can reach," and is measured at minus 459.67 degrees Fahrenheit.

—*Charles Kinnin Jr.*

No, absolute zero is defined as "a guy who rents *Mortal Kombat Mythologies* (which is bad enough), and then fact checks the instruction book."

GAME DESIGN-O-RAMA

Got proof that game design is best left to the pros? Send your concept (with art) to EGM@ziffdavis.com, subject: Design-o-rama



Be My New Daddy

Meet Eric. He's got everything a kid needs: a loving mom, imaginary friends, and a passion for professional bowling. What he doesn't have, thanks to inoperable brain cancer, is a dad. Meet Herb. He's a budding pro bowler with everything going his way...everything but love. Help Eric play Cupid between Herb and his mom. Help Herb win the World Bowling Cup. Help Eric's mom bring home what Eric wants most: a father. With *Be My New Daddy*, your Intellivision just got more heartwarming. Box of tissues sold separately.

—*Robert Ashley*

First angry mom letter?

Please cancel my subscription immediately. As a mother of a 12- and 13-year-old, I am appalled at the gross and sexually revolting advertisements you have allowed in your publication. You should consider changing your name to *EGM: Evil Gross Magazine*. In recent issues, I have seen themes of satanic worship, sexual bondage, and just plain violence! The straw that broke the camel's back was the *Spawn* ad with the guy's arm ripped off. If you guys are looking for shock value, you just succeeded in shocking yourself out of a subscriber.

—*Sharon Stewart*

Wow, this makes old *EGMs* sound way more awesome than they actually were.

Call for innovation

I don't know if it's just me, but I'm beginning to become bored with videogames in general. Come on, we've seen every type of game imaginable: shooters, action, simulations, puzzle, racing, and role-playing games. We've seen a lot of gimmicks like the Power Glove, the U-Force, and Sega's Master System 3D glasses. None really worked. Either companies need to come up with something original, or there are going to be some gamers like me leaving the hobby.

—*Michael Max*

And so it began, the call for innovation. A cry that echoed across the world, impaling the derivative, me-too games; bankrupting the makers of worthless, gimmicky peripherals; and destroying annual sequel franchises forever. Or not.

WIN THE GAME OF THE MONTH

XBOX 360
PGR 3

We've hidden movie quotes in this issue—spot one and you can win our Game of the Month. Go to **EGM-GOTM.1UP.com**. There you can send us a message (subject head: **Movie Quote: EGM #200**) with the quote, the movie it's from, and the page number you found it on. Include your mailing address (no P.O. boxes!) and your full name. Three randomly selected readers will win copies of this issue's Game of the Month.

The future of huge controllers

I just want to say "kudos" to publisher Capcom for having the *huevos* to take a huge risk on that monstrosity of a controller for its upcoming title *Steel Battalion*. You could argue that the company is a pioneer for bringing the arcade experience home. I wondered if you folks think this is going to be a new trend or just a fluke?

—*Jake*

The *Steel Battalion* controller is considered a child's toy these days. For a taste of the present, try Namco's *Space Shuttle Complete*, which ships with a life-size shuttle cockpit with over 2,000 switches and knobs, and retails for around $17,999. We've been stuck in the tutorial for over eight months now....

The pinnacle of controller excess or the birth of a new era?

"Best Xbox 360™ Game"
-GameSpot
E3 2005 EDITORS' CHOICE WINNER
FULL AUTO™
HORSEPOWER MEETS FIREPOWER

"BEST OF E3 EDITOR'S CHOICE AWARD"

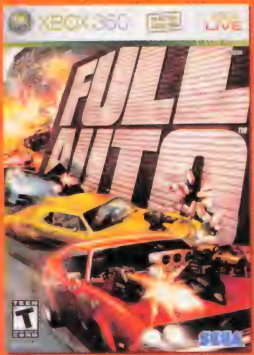
-Gamespy

"BEST RACING GAME OF SHOW"

-Hardcore Gamer Mag

"BEST OF SHOW: RACING"

-DailyGame.net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TEEN
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Violence

SEGA

ONLY ON XBOX 360

XBOX 360
XBOX LIVE

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press start

gaming news, previews, a fart button, and other stuff

Peter Moore, Xbox VP, holding his Xbox 360 with custom-painted faceplate.

>> WORRIED THAT NINTENDO'S NEXT CONSOLE WILL MISS OUT ON THE GAMES COMING TO THE PS3 AND XBOX 360? NINTENDO EXEC REGGIE

Photographs by David Clugston

MOORE'S LAW

He took on Sony and Nintendo. He's of global importance to Microsoft. And he hates our Kameo reviews. What does Peter Moore think of the Xbox 360's past, present, and future?

Peter Moore *should* be tired. Today, the Corporate Vice President of Worldwide Retail Sales and Marketing for Microsoft's Home and Entertainment Division (translation: He has to make Xbox 360 the No. 1 console in the world) woke up early enough to get in a 6 a.m. workout. So he could make this 8 a.m. interview with us. So he can work a full day afterwards. So he can finish in time to do a 5:00 p.m. photo shoot with us later. So he can wrap that up and work through the night (when it's business hours in Japan). So he can fly out to Tokyo in the morning. Just another 16-hour workday for the guy.

But Moore isn't tired. He's bright-eyed awake and ready to discuss the Xbox 360's recent problems and future prospects. The man seems to draw from an endless supply of energy whenever he talks to the press, which is good for him, because this interview is no walk in the park....

—Dan "Shoe" Hsu

The Past: Launch Time

EGM: What was your biggest worry leading up to the Xbox 360 launch?

Peter Moore: I think you always worry when you're launching brand-new hardware, something as complex and next generational as this, that software won't be ready in the quantity and quality that you hope for on day one.

But our biggest concern is getting the right launch titles out and meeting the genres that we need to for gamers' tastes. I think that now as I look back on it, we obviously did a phenomenal job, getting 18 titles out on day one, spanning just about every genre. I guess the only slight disappointment is that *Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion* didn't make it, that we didn't have a [role-playing game]. But there's never really been an RPG at the launch of any major console anyway, and *Elder Scrolls* is not far behind.

EGM: How did the 360 launch compare to the Dreamcast's, which you worked on, and PS2's?

PM: Well I certainly think the PlayStation 2, even by [Sony's] own admission, didn't have strong games at launch.

I think the Dreamcast had some great games at launch, but it didn't have the ability to sustain itself past the first six months, and of course it didn't have Electronic Arts on the platform at any point during its life cycle. So we're delighted with the quality and the quantity of titles at [Xbox 360's] launch on a global basis.

EGM: You really didn't need a *Halo* to launch the Xbox 360, did you?

PM: No, I don't think we did. It was never really in the plans. Clearly, when you're shipping *Halo 2* the year before the launch of a new platform, to expect [developer] Bungie to then immediately move on to a brand-new architecture and bring out a third iteration of a franchise worthy of being one of the greatest franchises in videogame history, it's unreasonable. So, we didn't believe we needed it. We felt that titles like *Perfect Dark Zero* would provide that first-person shooter fan with the fix they needed on launch day, particularly with the online elements of that title. It's nice to have [*Halo 3*] still in your back pocket, I guess.

EGM: What was your favorite launch game?

PM: *Kameo*! [*Laughs*] Some of the reviews are a little iffy—*Shoe*—but I think the game is gorgeous. I think the game, when you spend time with it, is very immersive. I continue to play it and discover things that I missed when I went through certain levels the first time. Just from a pure, lush, visual point of view, and some innovation in the gameplay...I'm real happy to call out *Kameo* as my favorite title. Clearly, *Perfect Dark Zero* is doing very, very well, and then from a third-party point of view, *Call of Duty 2* is leading the pack from what I understand right now.

> "...the PlayStation 2 didn't have strong games at launch."
>
> —Xbox Corporate Vice President Peter Moore

EGM: So we know you have a beef with our *Kameo* reviews. You've even mentioned you wanted to see a rereview, which ain't happening, by the way....

PM: I just felt that a launch title of that magnitude that's come from [developer] Rare deserves a bit more in-depth of a review. When you have a page divided by three people, a large paragraph each, it just didn't seem up to the quality of the reviews that I've begun to expect and enjoy from the magazine over the years that I've been reading it. And I've looked at some of the two- and three-page spreads for titles that I think are less worthy of the [space].

But, you know, I jokingly asked for a rereview. That's like asking for the referee to overturn a goal in soccer—most of the time it ain't going to happen. But I also felt that the focus [of the reviews] wasn't on the game, but on how long the game [took to get to] market. I just don't see the relevance of that.

The Present: You Got A Problem?

EGM: So we're seeing Xbox 360 glitches, overheating, and now you have a lawsuit on your hands over a "defectively designed product." ➤

■ ***Kameo: Elements of Power*...do the five of you out there who've played this game agree with our review scores? (6.0, 6.0, and 7.0 out of 10)**

FILS-AIME SAID IN A RECENT SPEECH THAT THIRD-PARTY DEVELOPERS WILL HAVE AN EASY TIME PORTING GAMES TO THE REVOLUTION.... >>

MOORE'S LAW (CONT.)

PM: I don't even think we've seen the suit yet, as often is the case here. The press release comes out from the plaintiff before the actual suit is received by us, and I think that's the situation here.

The huge majority of gamers are having trouble-free experiences with the Xbox 360. The very small number that have problems are being immediately taken care of by customer support. We Federal Express a shipping box to them, then they Federal Express the unit back, then we determine what the problem is and either replace it or repair it immediately. I don't think gamers can ask for anything more than that.

Really, the numbers are small. But in today's age of the Internet, you just need a dozen people to have a problem and it just seems to magnify itself enormously. Remember, we've shipped hundreds of thousands of these things around the world, and clearly here in the U.S. there have been a few problems, but we're taking care of them, and the people who actually do have the problems have nothing but great things to say about how they've been treated by customer service. No different from any other major consumer electronics product when you ship it in huge quantities.

EGM: Wouldn't you be pissed if you paid $400 for a new console and many of its games looked only marginally better than their current-gen equivalents?

PM: You wanna call out some games? Because I'm not gonna call out any games.

> "Clearly, there have been a few problems, but we're taking care of them."

XBOX 360
XBOX

EGM: The 2K Sports games. *Amped 3*. *Tony Hawk*. *Need for Speed*. *Gun*. *King Kong*. People can argue they're not getting that big next-gen leap in graphics. On top of that, you're asking consumers to pay an extra $10 for these games. To quote you, "Next-generation games will combine unprecedented audio and visual experiences, create worlds that are beyond real, and they'll deliver story lines and gameplay so compelling that it'll feel like a..."

PM: "...lucid dream."

EGM: And then you also said that every game has to have the "essentials," certain requirements every game must have.

PM: Well, the essentials have always been every game needs to output in [high-definition resolution] 720p. It's gotta have multichannel sound, 5.1 minimum. The games have to render in 16x9 aspect ratio, and they've gotta have 2x antialiasing. The games do.

You know, you called out *King Kong* as not looking next generation. The Xbox version looks great; you put it against the Xbox 360 version, though...[the 360 version] looks unbelievable. Games like *Gun* have not done well, but I don't know whether that's because of the graphics or because of the gameplay. It seems to be struggling in sales. But, it's such a subjective situation.

I've gotten a lot of e-mails, believe me, in the last 10 days from consumers on all kinds of things. It's the first time I've heard from people; nobody has ever said, "I'm unhappy with the game experience from the next generation." I've had a lot of complaints about a lot of [other] stuff, but nobody's complained about the games yet.

I think also, gamers—the guys and the gals that are lining up on the sidewalks during the first 24 or 48 hours—are also very rational about what they expect on day one. They know things are going to continue to look even better as we get into the platform cycle. If it's graphics that they're concerned about, those will continue to get even better than they currently are today. But again, graphics...it's such a subjective thing, and one man's meat is another man's poison when you look at particular games.

EGM: But let's look at the PS1 generation and the jump to Dreamcast. On all levels, no matter which games you look at, you can immediately

>> CAPCOM DEVELOPER KEIJI INAFUNE RECENTLY TOLD THE JAPANESE MAG *DORIMAGA* THAT THE COMPANY HOPES FOR A SIMULTANEOUS

see a huge improvement in graphics. With a lot of 360 games, the leap isn't there, don't you agree?

PM: That's an opinion that I don't share, but look at it [this way]...we're selling games at an unprecedented rate; we're breaking records. Clearly, consumers are happy about something. And I think it's not just people looking at the graphics. Where people are really excited is the online experience, the Marketplace experience, Xbox Live Arcade, and being able to join Xbox Live Silver for no charge and no credit card.

You can't just pinpoint and say the graphics in *Gun* don't look good, therefore the entire ecosystem's got a problem. Gamers are smarter than that. They're looking at the entire experience. They also know games will continue to look better, if looking good is one of their higher criteria, which it typically is. But there are enough great-looking games out there to combat that, if you're looking for graphics.

You know, people have to make their own choices, and if they determine that this is not worth their 400 bucks, then it does seem like there's somebody in line behind them that does think it is.

EGM: What's the deal with the voice-chat echo problem?

PM: Yeah, there are some issues; we're working on that. I think particularly in *Project Gotham Racing 3*, there's been a number of people that have got an echo on Xbox Live during voice chat. We're working on trying to find out what that is, and we'll fix that.

EGM: The machine's awfully loud, isn't it?

PM: Hmm...you've got a lot going on there. I mean, I have not noticed it, and you know one of the cores will shut down when you're watching a movie on it, so I have noticed [the noise] once I get into gameplay. When it first cranks up, like a lot of things, the fans get going and off you go, but you've got a lot of power, you've got a lot of heat, and what you're hearing is the drive or the fans maybe—those things have to work. Again, that's another thing that nobody seems to be concerned about.

EGM: OK, we're going to throw two games at you at a time, and we want you to tell us which one you like better.

PM: Ugh, just like saying which of my kids do I love more.

EGM: We hope we've made these easy for you. So: *Splinter Cell Chaos Theory* or *Sneakers*?

PM: [*Laughs*] Well, as fond as I was of *Sneakers*, I have to say that *Splinter Cell* probably [tops] it.

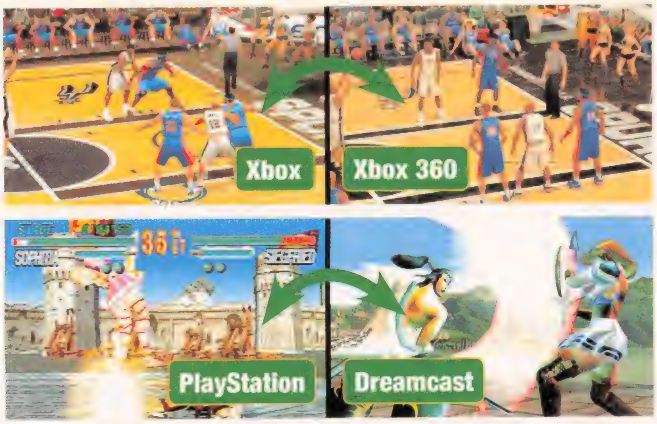
EGM: How about *Soul Calibur II* or *Kabuki Warriors*?

PM: Well, that would be *Soul Calibur II*.

EGM: Next: *Dead or Alive: Xtreme Beach Volleyball* or *Barbie Horse Adventures: Wild Horse Rescue*?

PM: Ah, *Xtreme Volleyball*...anything that [*Dead or Alive* creator Tomonobu] Itagaki-san does is always a big favorite with me. He's always been a big supporter of the platform, and it would be disloyal for me not to choose his title.

EGM: So here's what we're getting at: You picked three Xbox 1 games that aren't backwards compatible on the Xbox 360, and the other ones—*Sneakers*, *Kabuki*, and *Barbie*—are. It's a weird list, especially when you exclude the heavy hitters....



■ **Top row: *NBA 2K6* gets slightly smoothed over for Xbox 360. Big difference? We don't think so. Bottom row: *Soul Blade* (PS1) looked great, but *Soul Calibur* (DC) looked oh-my-god when it came out. For more Xbox to Xbox 360 screenshot comparisons, check out hdera.1UP.com.**

■ **Take your *Barbie Horse Adventures* and stick it up your ass, Moore tells us (if you read between the lines).**

[Shortly after this interview, Microsoft announced all three *Splinter Cells* to be backwards compatible on the Xbox 360. But we still thought this conversation was funny, so we left it intact.—*Ed.*]

PM: Well, nobody excludes anything. You, probably like me, are not well versed in the vagaries of software emulation technology and how deep you need to go. Some games work because they can, because of the software emulation engine—and some don't. It's not like we said, "Hmm, *Splinter Cell* or *Barbie*...let's go for *Barbie*!" That's not how it's done. I'd be happy to get some of Microsoft's best and brightest to explain some of the technical reasons why one game works and another doesn't. Because I don't understand it....

EGM: Well, obviously you're not going to purposely pick *Barbie* over *Splinter Cell*, but at what point is it not worth it to tell your programmers, "Get *Splinter Cell* working on our system"?

PM: Let's go back a year, when everybody was saying, "Boy, you know what? The games aren't going to be backwards compatible—this is a disaster, we're never going to get it done." And then we said the top-selling games will be backwards compatible. And people asked if that's five or six games, and we came out with a list of 212, and still people pick it apart and ask, "Why is *Barbie* here?" Well, don't play *Barbie*. It's almost as if there's no winning in this situation. Is it perfect? Is every game backwards compatible that you want to be? No. There are huge technical issues that negate us from being able to provide that to the consumer, yes. Have I heard a single negative word since launch about backwards compatibility? No.

The Future: Is Not Now

EGM: What about the PlayStation 3 worries you?

PM: Well, until I learn a lot more about it, then it's tough to worry about it. Is the spring launch date still on? What is the content? What are gonna be the day-one titles? What is their online strategy? It's very difficult to do any kind of analysis—where ➤

360 TIPS

The Xbox 360 is a versatile machine with a useless manual, so we put together a list of frequent issues.
—Greg Sewart

Echo!

Distracted by that **echo** in voice chat? Have all players move their mics away from their big mouths and turn down the volume on the headsets *and* in Personal Settings (found on your personal Guide Blade by tapping the Xbox 360 Guide button on your controller). Or try using your original Xbox headset, which plugs into the 360 controller.

Your type

Hate poking in letters with the joypad? Jack in a **USB keyboard** and type away.

Change of view

To change your **background theme**, go to Personal Settings (hit the Xbox 360 Guide button on the controller).

Broken streams

If your **360 and PC won't talk to each other** using Windows Media Connect, try setting up a home network on your Windows XP system (Start/Control Panel/Network and Internet Connections/Setup or Change your home network). If that doesn't work, try downloading and installing .NET Framework 1.1 from Microsoft.

Crash or burn

If your 360 is **crashing**, it might be overheating. Give the machine and its King Kong power brick plenty of room.

Still turned on?

If your wireless controller is plugged in, don't worry if your **360 is still whirling** after you turn it off. It's just charging your control pad, is all.

iTunes tunes

We've found a program that will convert your older **iTunes songs** to MP3s playable on the 360. Check pg. 54.

Charging iPods

Third generation and older **iPods won't charge** on your 360. Try getting Apple's "dock connector to FireWire and USB 2.0" cable and plugging one end into an AC adapter.

RELEASE OF *RESIDENT EVIL 5* ON THE PS3 AND XBOX 360. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE GAME WILL HAVE SOME KIND OF ONLINE ELEMENT.... >>

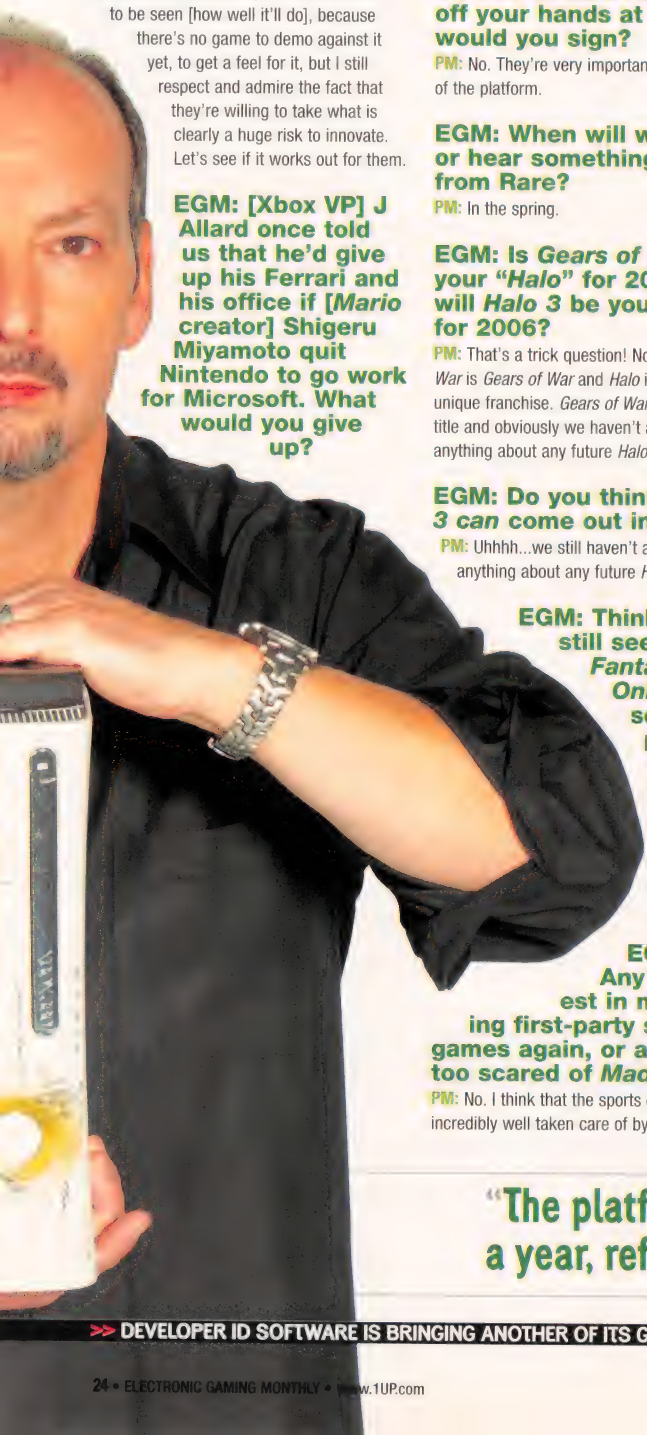
MOORE'S LAW (CONT.)

➤ we feel we're weak or strong—when you don't have the information.

What we're completely focused on is driving our installed base, continuing to work with our third-party publishers to get great content on the box, and everything else is out of our hands as far as what the competition is going to do.

EGM: What do you think about the Nintendo Revolution controller?

PM: I found it very intriguing, and I'm always a big fan of companies that try and innovate in a space where we need to do things a little differently. It still remains to be seen [how well it'll do], because there's no game to demo against it yet, to get a feel for it, but I still respect and admire the fact that they're willing to take what is clearly a huge risk to innovate. Let's see if it works out for them.



EGM: [Xbox VP] J Allard once told us that he'd give up his Ferrari and his office if [*Mario* creator] Shigeru Miyamoto quit Nintendo to go work for Microsoft. What would you give up?

PM: [*Laughs*] For Miyamoto-san...well, I don't have a Ferrari to give up. I'd give up J's Ferrari again. I have five cars. Most of them are owned by my wife and kids, but I think I'd probably give 'em all up for Miyamoto-san. I'm a huge fan, and I share J's desire that one day he will bring his incredible content and his incredible vision for what gaming should be to the Xbox. Yeah, I'd give up all of my cars. Might give up my house, too, if I could get it reimbursed back on my expenses. [*Laughs*] I'm not sure that would happen.

EGM: If Nintendo or Sony offered to take Rare off your hands at cost, would you sign?

PM: No. They're very important to the future of the platform.

EGM: When will we see or hear something new from Rare?

PM: In the spring.

EGM: Is *Gears of War* your "*Halo*" for 2006, or will *Halo 3* be your *Halo* for 2006?

PM: That's a trick question! No, *Gears of War* is *Gears of War* and *Halo* is a very unique franchise. *Gears of War* is a 2006 title and obviously we haven't announced anything about any future *Halo* titles.

EGM: Do you think *Halo 3 can* come out in 2006?

PM: Uhhhh...we still haven't announced anything about any future *Halo* titles!

EGM: Think we'll still see *True Fantasy Live Online* at some point?

PM: Not right now. No. I would put that close to zero right now.

EGM: Any interest in making first-party sports games again, or are you too scared of *Madden*?

PM: No. I think that the sports category is incredibly well taken care of by both EA Sports and 2K Sports, and in the world of soccer, Konami does a fabulous job with *Winning Eleven*. I just don't think we add value there. My role is figuring out where Microsoft Game Studios should apply its resources and its talent. Coming up with another sports sim and competing with our partners in a space that already seems to be very competitive—and incredibly well taken care of with very talented developers—just doesn't make any fiscal sense or sense for the consumer.

It's official: *Gears of War* (pictured here) is NOT *Halo*. It's simply *Gears of War*. That's that.

EGM: What games due out in the next six months are you most excited for, besides *Oblivion*?

PM: I'm looking forward to *Ghost Recon: Advanced Warfighter*. I think *Tomb Raider* is showing some real progress, and I'm hopeful that Lara [Croft] gets reborn with this latest iteration of this great franchise. What else...at some point I think you're going to see *Fight Night* [see pg. 64—*Ed.*], and from the little peek under the tent that I've seen recently, that thing now looks truly next generational. And I'm a big fan of the franchise anyway, so there's that. *Splinter Cell* at some point in 2006 will be out—we always look forward to Ubisoft [games] because they make great use of the Xbox Live service....

EGM: What about beyond six months—what are you looking forward to in the next five years?

PM: *Gears of War* has everybody excited—the game continues to make progress. I think *Crackdown* is gonna be a visually interesting game. As well as taking an interesting look at the urban style of action-adventure-type games, *Crackdown* takes a very different perspective on where the action comes from. *Mass Effect* is something I look forward to—any game from BioWare always excites me. And then of course [I'm excited about] things that we haven't announced yet that I can't talk about right now....

And then our third-party partners continue to [offer] just a wealth of great content. THQ has got *Saint's Row* coming through, *The Outfit*.... I think *Elder Scrolls* will do really well. I look back at that game, and, you know, *Morrowind* did nearly a million units on the original Xbox, and I have to believe that [the new one] has got a great opportunity to do even more.

EGM: Right now Xbox Live Marketplace is home to icons, themes, Live Arcade games, demos, and trailers. In the future, will you be able to buy anything more significant that may affect actual gameplay, like say, cars in driving games, or...

PM: Oh, absolutely. I don't know what our schedule for release is, but as early as this spring, you're going to have the ability to buy and download tracks, cars, characters... all kinds of different things that'll refresh the game experience. There'll be a combination of stuff that will be for purchase, for points, and some stuff that may be free.

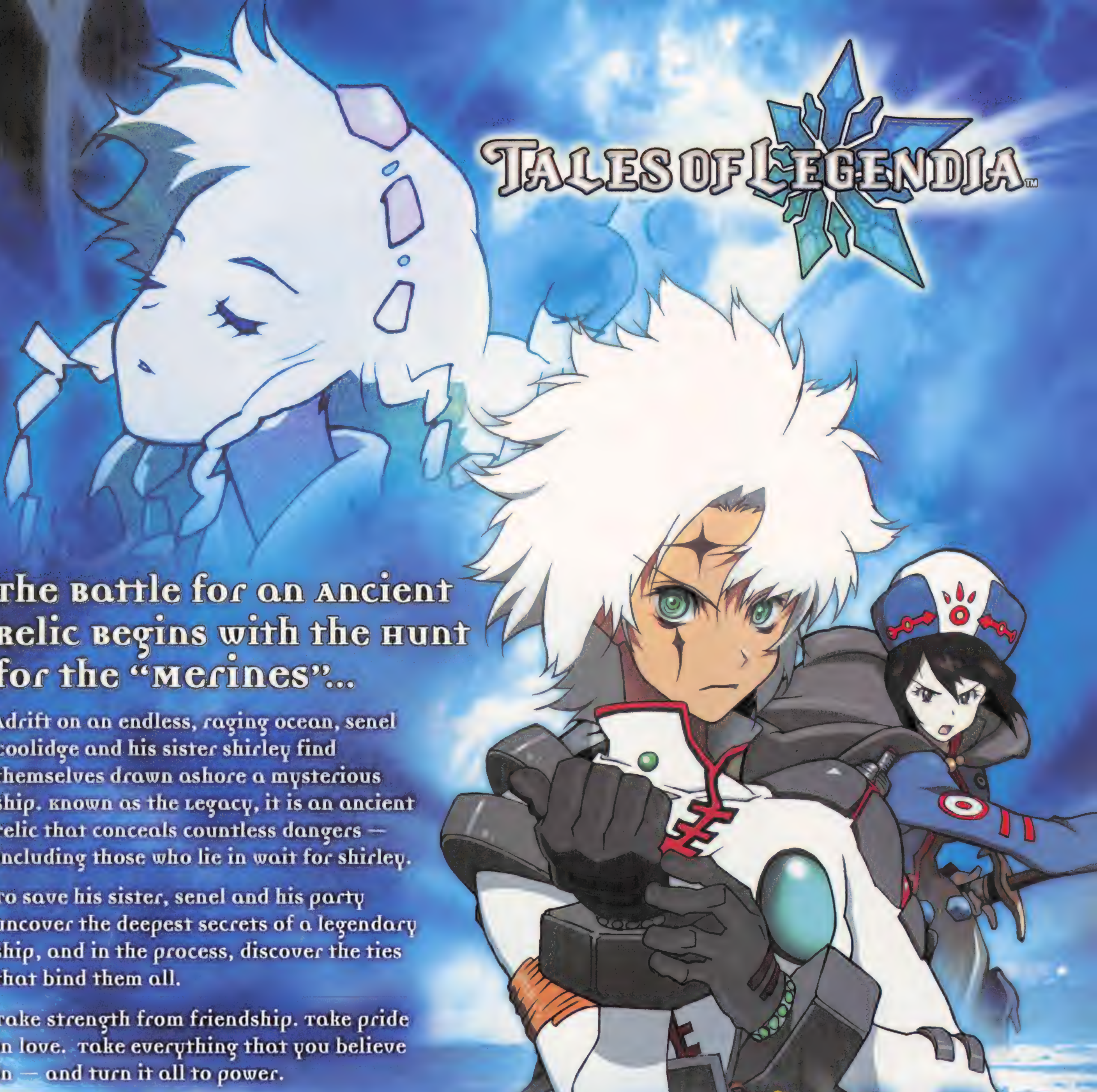
The great thing about Marketplace is that it allows us to continue to interact with the gamer, [not only] to refresh the experience, but to make the games better.

EGM: Let's say you want to introduce something ➤

> "The platform-development team should come back in a year, refreshed and looking for the next challenge."

>> DEVELOPER ID SOFTWARE IS BRINGING ANOTHER OF ITS GAMES, *WOLFENSTEIN*, TO THE BIG SCREEN. WASN'T *DOOM* BAD ENOUGH?.... >>

TALES OF LEGENDIA™



The Battle for an Ancient Relic Begins with the Hunt for the "Merines"...

Adrift on an endless, raging ocean, senel coolidge and his sister shirley find themselves drawn ashore a mysterious ship. Known as the Legacy, it is an ancient relic that conceals countless dangers — including those who lie in wait for shirley.

To save his sister, senel and his party uncover the deepest secrets of a legendary ship, and in the process, discover the ties that bind them all.

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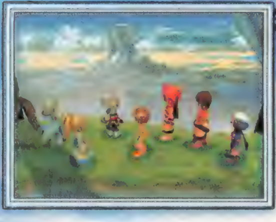

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MOORE'S LAW (CONT.)

➤ that will affect gameplay, like a new car or a new weapon, and you have an entire group of Xbox 360 gamers that don't have access to the Internet. How will they access this content and how will they play with the people who do have it? How will it be balanced?

PM: Well, that's all going to be determined by the depth of what we're doing. There may be an opportunity, as we did with *Halo 2* as you recall, where the maps and levels are significant enough that we actually put them on a disc and sell them at retail. But I would [suspect] that the folks who are interested in that sort of thing...the great majority *do* have access to the Internet. But you know, if you're that interested in downloads like that, then it may be time to get a high-speed Internet connection in your home.

EGM: When do you start working on the successor to the Xbox 360?

PM: Uh...I think the team that is on vacation right now would probably rebel if we started talking about going back to work and building the next one. I think you give them a little breather. What people don't see behind the scenes is the incredible work that development teams do in the six to nine months before a platform is released. There is so much work to do, testing, building the relationships with the suppliers, getting everything into the factories, making sure that everything we do is pristine, getting the games [certified], getting them through all of the test cycles we need to do, and then getting [the machines] to market and doing it globally, and getting games translated into 12 different languages....

The consumer only sees the end product on the shelf, but boy, there's an incredible amount of work that went into that. So the platform-development team is taking a well-earned break, and they should come back in a year, refreshed and looking for the next challenge.

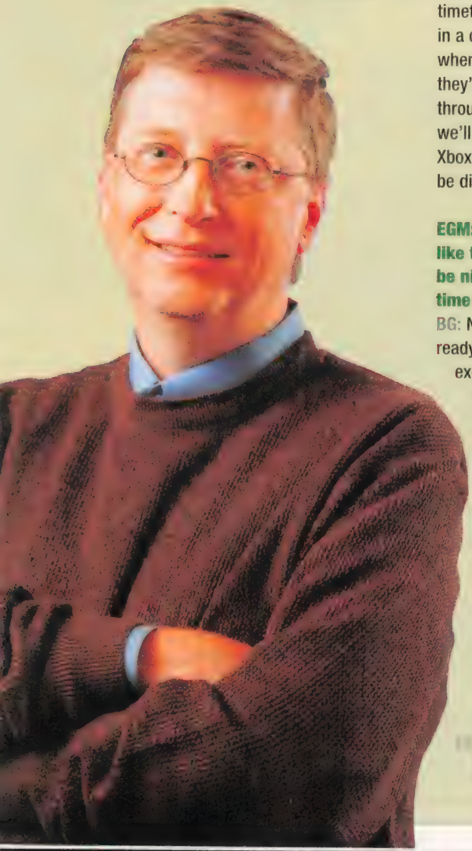
MULTIPLIER x2

■ ***Geometry Wars*: the best reason to check out Xbox Live Marketplace.**

AND THEN THERE'S THIS GUY...

Does Bill Gates know something about Halo 3? (Answer: No)

Microsoft head honcho Bill Gates makes an OK living selling computer software. But the geek from Redmond, WA, thinks he can finally score some real cash with this Xbox 360 thingy....



EGM: You told *Time* magazine, "The day Sony launches the new PlayStation, they walk right into *Halo 3*." Is Bungie Studios OK with the development timetable you laid out for them?

Bill Gates: Well, they will set their own timetable. [*Laughs*] I don't get to decide in a creative process like that exactly when things come together. Obviously they're working hard on another breakthrough—as soon as that thing gets done we'll put it out. We do think it'll be a great Xbox 360 title, but the timing on that won't be dictated by a competitor.

EGM: Isn't there a bit of you that would like to tell Bungie, "You know, it'd sure be nice if you could get *Halo 3* done in time for the PlayStation 3 launch...."

BG: No, no, no...it's nice to have things ready for holiday seasons, so a bold executive might say to them, "Hey, you know, give it a shot for such and such a holiday season." But really...I was just overebullient when I made that comment.

EGM: Microsoft has lost roughly $1 billion a year on the first Xbox since it launched. Was that worth it?

BG: We knew going into the original Xbox that we would lose...a lot. Or you can say, invest a lot—that's the nice way to say that. And we knew the only thing we'd get out of that first generation was the learning and credibility that came with that experience.

EGM: If you lose money on the Xbox 360, will there be another successor?

BG: Of course! I mean, geez—it was my decision to get into videogaming, so we're going to make that look like a good decision no matter how long it takes. [*Laughs*] But we feel very good that we'll make money this time around. The things we got wrong last time, we've learned from.

EGM: 360's graphics aren't mind-blowing, especially without an HDTV....

BG: Well, the Xbox 360 graphics are amazing, and that's where the high-definition generation really comes in. With Xbox Live [on the original Xbox] we made a big bet on broadband, that the penetration would come up. Here again, we're making a bet that high definition becomes more prevalent. As you say, you don't get the full benefit of the amazing graphics until you get up to HD, and then when you see that, it's pretty stunning....

EGM: But broadband penetration when Xbox 1 launched was much higher than HDTV penetration is right now....

BG: I think that's right...but the prices are coming down and the availability's going up. So that is a bet that we're making. In terms of our graphics pipeline, we actually think it's better than what Sony will come out with.

EGM: Do you wish Microsoft had come up with the idea for the Nintendo Revolution controller?

BG: Uh...no. [*Laughs*] We'll watch and see. Holding two different things like that? Anyway, Nintendo...you've got to give it to them. They march to the beat of a different drummer. Sometimes that makes them incredibly right and sometimes that makes them incredibly wrong. They're certainly making a very different bet in terms of how much they're putting into the graphics this time. I do think there is a question as to whether they can get outside the young age bracket at all. That's been tough for them.

EGM: Who would serve as better backup, Master Chief or [crazy-ass Microsoft CEO] Steve Ballmer?

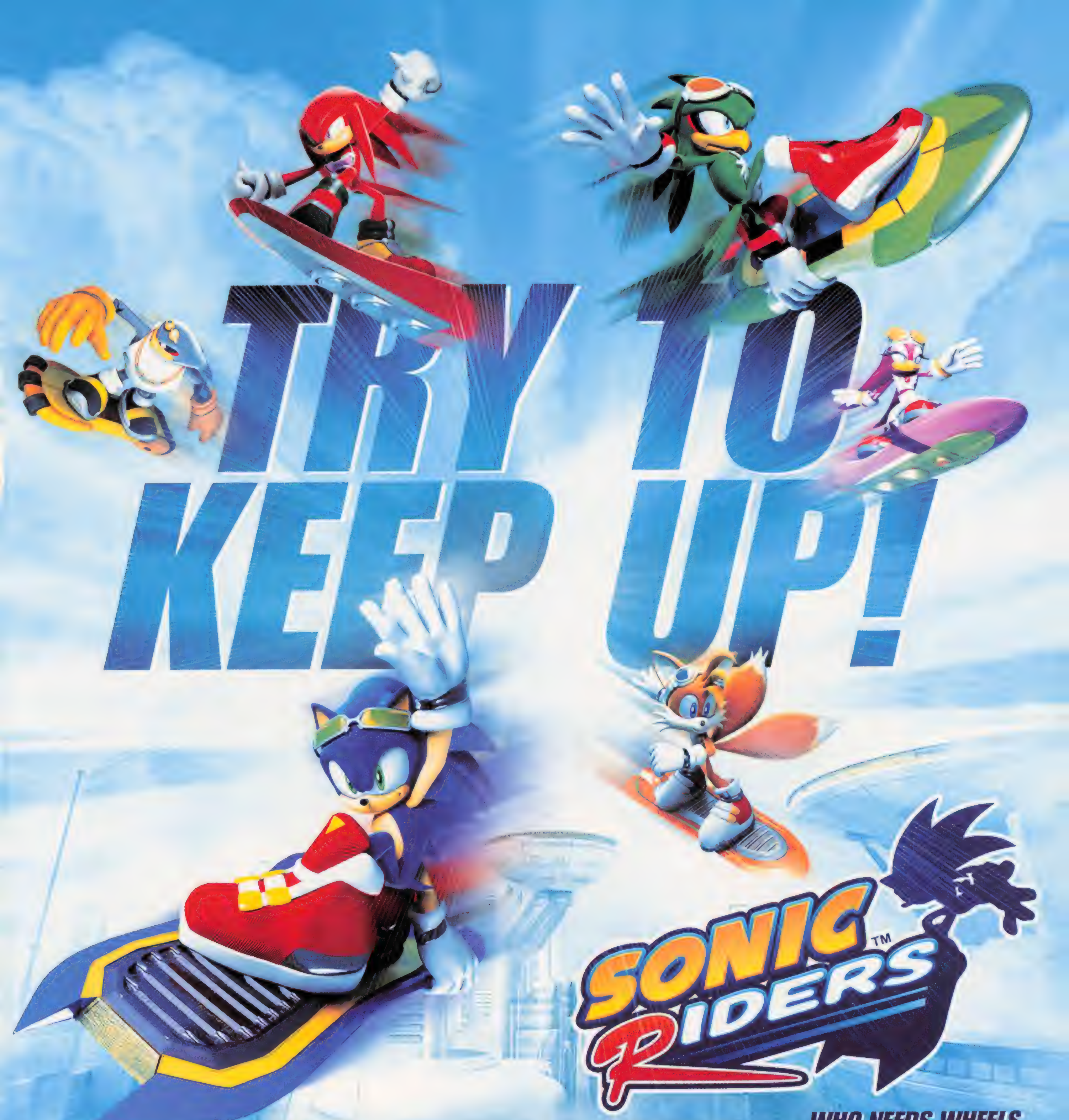
BG: You know, I don't know how to give a serious answer to that.... Master Chief is very good looking, he's...

EGM: You know, we haven't seen Master Chief's face....

BG: Well, he's kinda got this mysterious thing going on. There are some similarities...maybe he *is* Steve, for all we know. Steve sneaks off from time to time.... Both are hardcore guys. 👾

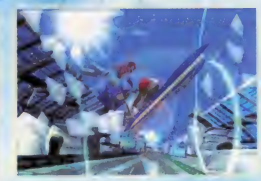
> "[Nintendo marches] to the beat of a different drummer."

>> NEW ROLEPLAYERS—*VALKYRIE PROFILE 2* (PS2) AND *VALKYRIE PROFILE: LENNOTH* (PSP)—ARE BOTH DUE OUT SOMETIME IN 2006.... >>



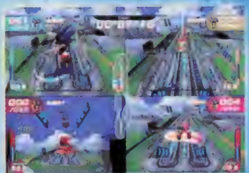
WHO NEEDS WHEELS WHEN YOU'VE GOT AIR?

Surf the Turbulence!



Catch Massive Air!

Shred the Wake!



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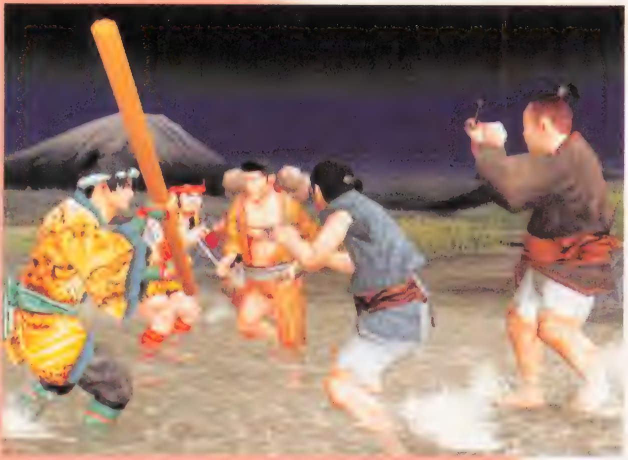
Where men are men and women are half-naked

PS2

NINKYOUDEN: TOSEININ ICHIDAIKI

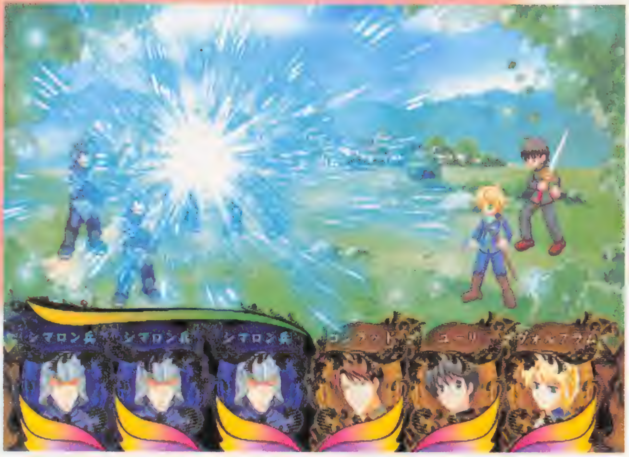


I've seen this game before! You probably have—Japanese publisher Genki has put out approximately 5 squillion action-adventure games set in ye olde 18th century Japan. *Ninkyouden*'s different because—for once—you aren't a samurai, shogun, or anyone particularly respectable. You're just a random tattooed, barhopping bastard with a couple of underlings, and your mission is to build up a yakuza mob strong enough to intimidate the whole country into submission.

So how do I become "the man?" The usual: Beat up a ton of thugs, act silly around the women, and win a series of gambling-oriented minigames. Other titles may have experience points, but this one has "manliness" levels. Namby-pamby *Final Fantasy* heroes are not invited.

PS2

KYO KARA MAOH!



What's so different about this one? Oh man, this role-playing game gives a whole new meaning to the word "different." Developed by a staff at Namco composed mostly of (dirty-minded) ladies, *Kyo Kara Maoh!* stars Yuri, a typical high-schooler who gets sucked through a toilet into the Great Demon Kingdom, where he's crowned Demon King and inadvertently gets engaged to a blond, effeminate prince.

Is this for real? Yep—in fact, it's based on an anime that's out on DVD in the United States. And it *is* a real RPG, albeit one with a lot of jokes about cross-dressing and flamboyant sea pirates.

BY THE NUMBERS

Everyone loves a good poke

1998	Year that *Pokémon Red* and *Blue* (Game Boy) were released in the United States
15 Billion	Amount (in U.S. dollars) that, according to Nintendo, the *Pokémon* franchise has generated in worldwide sales
386	Number of known *Pokémon* critters
1	Number of *Pokémon* TV episodes that caused some Japanese children to have seizures

Pikachu and Ash, inducing seizures one kid at a time.

ON THE AUCTION BLOCK

We've put together a short lesson for the hopelessly deluded on what obsession is actually worth.

Item: **A Famicom (known as the NES in the United States) 20th anniversary box set** with 30 Famicom Mini GBA games.
Asking Price: $1,000. Bids? Zero.

Item: **A *Castlevania: Aria of Sorrow* (GBA) cartridge signed by its creator, Koji Igarashi.**
Asking Price: $95. Number of bids? Zero.

Item: Here's a copy of ***Bubble Bath Babes* (NES)**, the rare 8-bit action-bathing hotties simulator.
Asking Price: $525. Number of bids? Zero.

Item: What sells? A **Mario costume**. And look at the cute kid modeling the outfit. He's adorable! Plus, he's got something these other auctions don't—an actual buyer.
Winning Bid: $91.

>> BLIZZARD HAS CANNED THE GAMECUBE VERSION OF *STARCRAFT: GHOST*, WHICH IS STILL COMING TO PS2 AND XBOX IN SPRING '06.... >>

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   Catch an enemy in the shoulder and spin him around into the enemy behind him, blow the balcony out beneath another—get creative with your kills.

ALL GUNS BLAZING

RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

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XBOX

PlayStation 2

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PS2/XB **EXCLUSIVE FIRST LOOK**

THE DA VINCI CODE

Publisher: 2K Games
Developer: The Collective/Foundation 9
Release Date: May 2006

Who knew Mona Lisa was a gamer?

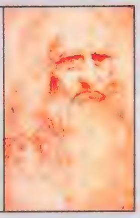
The best-selling novel *The Da Vinci Code* is one of those books you hear about long before you read it. You might pick it up with some initial skepticism—will it lead to a slippery slope of Oprah-approved literature that ends with *Tuesdays With Morrie*? (And do you really want to read the same novels as your mom?) It only takes a couple of pages, though, before even the doubters are hooked. The murder mystery mixed with cryptography plus a dash of power politics deep within the bowels of the Vatican makes for truly scintillating reading. *The Da Vinci Code* is a page-turner even for the less literary-minded out there.

But those same doubters really couldn't be blamed for wondering why a videogame company might snap up *The Da Vinci Code* license. It's not like the book spent a gazillion weeks on the best-seller lists because males aged 18 to 34 were putting it on their Amazon wish lists. If you think about it, though, adapting this book into a game makes a lot of sense. Solving the mystery of a gruesome murder requires you to decipher complex codes, find clues hidden in paintings, and unearth secret doors and hallways.... You're constantly evading a sinister assassin who represents a shadowy cabal out to destroy you.... You visit a series of exotic locations, from the Louvre Museum in Paris to the Pope's chambers in the Vatican to the catacombs of Rome and the cathedrals of Britain.... Really, all you need now is a nifty sidekick (surprise! *DVC* has one) and the game basically designs itself.

The Da Vinci Code is in development by The Collective and is scheduled for release this May to coincide with the opening of the motion picture also based on the book. It's a third-person action-adventure that plays out the same events from the novel using a variety of standard gameplay mechanics. Sneaking down quiet hallways, car chases through Rome, labyrinthine hedge mazes, melee fighting psychotic monks—if Vatican priests in ancient Rome did it, chances are it's in this game.

>> SONY HIRES A BUNCH OF APES—THE HARDWARE MAKER RECENTLY ACQUIRED DEVELOPMENT HOUSE GUERRILLA GAMES (*KILLZONE*). THE

ABOUT THE ARTIST



Back in the old days, it wasn't enough to be just a master painter. The original Renaissance man, Leonardo da Vinci, also studied anatomy, developed plans for a helicopter, and even designed the first robot in recorded history. And he invented the pump sneaker.

Sources close to the project reveal that the Da Vinci Code is definitely not Up, Up, Down, Down, Left, Right, Left, Right, B, A, Start.

The player will assume the role of Robert Langdon, the novel's dashing protagonist. He's a Harvard professor and the world's leading symbologist (someone who interprets codes and cryptographs). Langdon is played by lovable everyman Tom Hanks in the movie, though it's not yet certain whether Hanks' likeness will be in the game. (Naturally, we're hoping at least his laughably feathery hairdo will be represented.) You'll also play as Langdon's cohort, Sophie Neveu (played in the movie by *Amelie* cutie Audrey Tautou). Cordy Rierson, producer on the game, describes the two characters as "stylistically and behaviorally different, providing the player a variety of experiences, including stealth, adventure, and combat." Each character will have his or her own strengths and weaknesses, too. "Sophie's petite stature, physical speed, agility, and law enforcement skills" will be her primary assets, says Rierson, while Langdon will utilize his "knowledge, physical capabilities, and prowess."

In other words, this won't be a point and click adventure tale full of arcane puzzles and other such dull fare that might be more familiar to the people who haven't played any games but *CSI* or *Myst*. "There is so much diversity offered to the player in this game," says Rierson, "whether it's stealth play through dark corridors, creating diversions for a quick getaway, or facing the fire going toe-to-toe with a mercenary monk while fighting for your life." So, while the book may have been targeted at the geriatric set, the game sounds like it's aimed directly at today's action gamers.

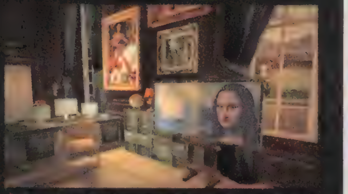
The movie is being directed by Ron Howard, who's come a long, long way since *The Burbs*. Recently, he's executive produced several TV series that are hits with the gamer crowd (*Arrested Development*, *24*), and his record with movies (*A Beautiful Mind*, *Cinderella Man*) is impeccable. So if Steven Spielberg is getting involved in making games with Electronic Arts and Peter Jackson's all about *Kong*, we wondered if Ron Howard ➤

ANNOUNCEMENT ALSO CONFIRMED THAT GUERRILLA IS CURRENTLY MAKING *KILLZONE* TITLES FOR BOTH PLAYSTATION 3 AND PSP.... >>

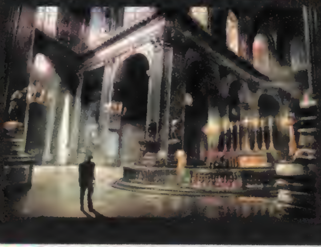
THE DA VINCI CODE (CONT.)

➤ would be wanting to get in on this game action. "Ron Howard has provided some key creative suggestions that have helped us stay true to the movie's spirit and touch on the major themes," says Rierson. That said, the game will offer something new even to someone who's read the book and seen the movie. "The game expands *The Da Vinci Code* universe and allows the player to explore locations not visited in the book or the film," says Rierson.

These early screens give no clear indication of how the game will play. But if even one out of 10 of the grannies who loved the book decides to pick this game up, it'll still stand a pretty good chance of outselling artsy fare such as *Beyond Good and Evil.* —*Jennifer Tsao*



Some key locales came to us only as concept art (below) despite a slated May release date.



KNOW THE CODE

Fun facts about everyone's favorite airplane read

The Vatican
In the book, the Catholic Church's worldwide headquarters is where a lot of the major action goes down, and we'd imagine with all its hush-hush holiness, it will surely be the setting for a stealth mission or two in the game. Nuns, typically, don't suffer trespassers lightly....

The Louvre
The scene of the crime, and of the Mona Lisa. According to the website for the book, the museum's art collection is so massive that it would require an unwieldy number of full-time staffers to monitor all the museum's security cameras. Consequently, a bunch of the cameras are fake.

Mona Lisa
Possibly the world's most famous work of art, *La Gioconda*, as she's known in her native Italian, plays a prominent role in *The Da Vinci Code.* The book posits that this painting, along with *The Last Supper*, contains hidden clues about Catholicism's deepest, darkest secrets.

Opus Dei
Respectable Catholic prelature that promotes clean living and hard work, or shadow cult with misogynistic, masochistic tendencies and a right-wing political agenda? We're still figuring that one out for sure, but you can imagine which characterization made it into the book.

Albino Monks
The primary villain is Opus Dei operative Silas, a sex-crazed and self-flagellating albino monk. The negative characterization has albino rights activists up in arms—especially as Silas' eyes are spookily described as red. "That's a myth," says one expert. "Most often in people with albinism the eyes are light blue or even hazel." (For the record, the movie stars the blue-eyed Paul Bettany in the role.)

>> EARLY IN 2006, LIONS GATE HOME ENTERTAINMENT WILL RELEASE *THE DOORS*, *MADE*, AND *GODSEND* ON THE PSP UMD FORMAT.... >>

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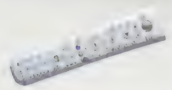

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AFTERTHOUGHTS: STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT II

Questions, we ask

Congrats. You defeated the evil Empire and saved all of human-, droid-, and Ewok-kind. But the victory didn't seem quite as grand or epic as how it all went down in the flicks. We think it's because *Star Wars Battlefront II* (PS2/XB), as fun as it is, could've been better. So we threw some tough questions at Eric "Giz" Gewirtz (that's "Giz" with a hard "g" sound, by the way), director at developer Pandemic Studios, to see what he has to say for himself.

—Dan "Shoe" Hsu

EGM: Is *Star Wars* still cool?

Giz: Obviously *Star Wars* is still cool. It's maintained its coolness factor for the generation that grew up with it, and it's been able to pull in an entire new generation with the new trilogy. It's an amazing universe—it's one of a kind.

EGM: You have seen Darth Vader trying to score some free tacos in Taco Bell commercials, haven't you?

Giz: You know, it's never really bothered me as much as seeing Yoda Force-levitate a Pepsi can. The way I figure it is, *Star Wars* has been so entrenched in our society on so many levels—there are so many movies that reference *Star Wars* that have nothing to do with *Star Wars*, for example—that for *Star Wars* itself to acknowledge that it's an icon doesn't bother me personally. I just see that as no different from, say, a Kevin Smith movie trying to explain love in the form of Leia's relationship with Han. [*Laughs*]

EGM: *Battlefront* feels really flimsy and insubstantial compared to games like *Halo 2*. It's like playing war with plastic figures rather than actually *being* a stormtrooper or Rebel soldier....

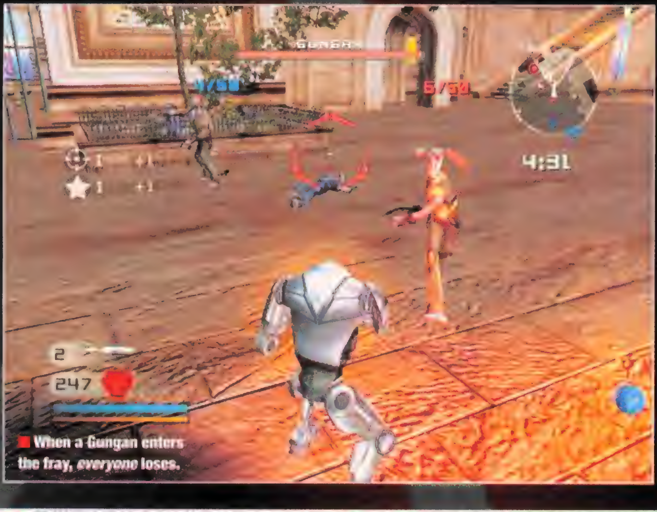
Giz: That's fairly intentional. We didn't want to go for the gritty, "realistic" *Star Wars* experience, what it would really be like to be a stormtrooper, for example...how hot it would be under the helmet....

Growing up, none of us had all of the toys. You just couldn't get all the toys. You'd go over to your rich friend's house, and he had the AT-AT and the *Millennium Falcon*, and you'd set up as much as you can to do the Battle of Hoth. But you really wanted to have at your disposal every single cool character and toy from the *Star Wars* universe. We wanted to deliver on that experience—no game has ever done that.

EGM: Another complaint: The artificial intelligence really isn't there....

Giz: I feel like we've been getting a lot fewer complaints about that for *Battlefront II* than we did for *Battlefront I*. I personally feel like the A.I. kicks ass and does just what it's supposed to. But at the same time we strike that balance of making you feel like you are a hero in the *Star Wars* universe, which is what we were going for.

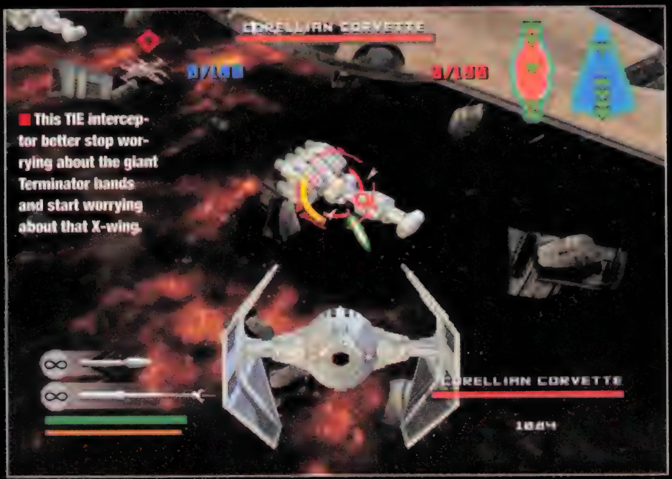
There are limitations with the current generation of platforms...but we wanted to make sure the A.I. looked like it was working as a team. Considering some of our competitors like *Battlefield 2* [PC], where



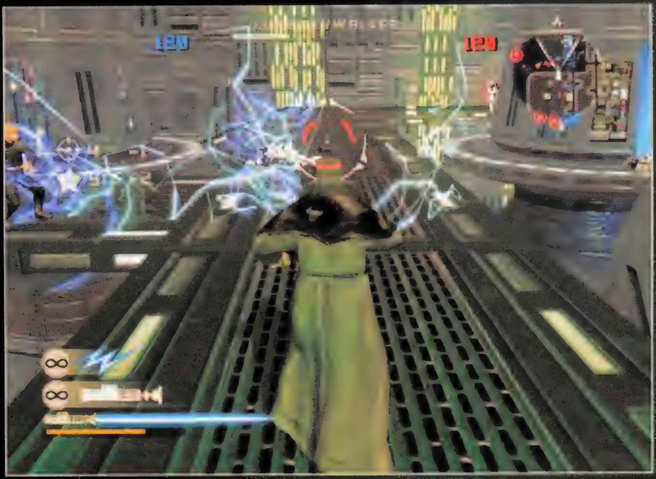
When a Gungan enters the fray, *everyone* loses.

General Grievous: not a big fan of the 'Tussin. *cough*

>> THINK YOU CAN WEAVE A PRETTY GOOD TALE? THEN MAYBE YOU SHOULD CONSIDER ENTERING BIOWARE'S (*STAR WARS: KNIGHTS OF THE*



■ This TIE interceptor better stop worrying about the giant Terminator hands and start worrying about that X-wing.



they just have Conquest [mode] gameplay, I think it's pretty impressive our A.I. can play capture the flag. It can [even] have a full match, A.I. versus A.I., moving in groups to capture, run, and defend the flag.

Our snipers will actually look for sniping points, our rocket launcher guys will seek out the nearest vehicle, and they really work well within their own specialized unit and also in different game modes. I don't think we get enough credit for how difficult that is to do, especially compared to some of these simpler games where they're just focused on one style of gameplay like Conquest.

EGM: Have you ever tried challenging the *Battlefield* developers to a friendly match of your game or theirs?

Giz: No, that would be fun, though—that would be really fun.

EGM: The all-special-guys mode is rather unbalanced. Han Solo is pretty useless against a Jedi....

Giz: Yeah, to be honest, we didn't really worry about it that much. The novelty was to run around as the special characters. It's too difficult to balance Anakin Skywalker versus the Emperor versus Darth Maul versus Yoda: Those people were never meant to be fairly matched. [*Laughs*] It's kind of the same thing as playing as the Ewoks or Gungans in Hunt mode.

> **"Fans won't be disappointed with where this franchise goes."**
>
> *—Pandemic Director Eric "Giz" Gewirtz*

EGM: Yeah, Ewoks versus scout troopers isn't a very fair fight, but we actually had a multiplayer match in the office where the Ewok team won, and that really stunned everyone.

Giz: It hurts, doesn't it? We had that here, too—the first team that won as the Ewoks never let anyone live it down. At the office, my team lost against the Gungans, and I think it's actually more humiliating than losing to the Ewoks, because the Ewok team could at least say, "Well, that's what happened in the movies." But the Gungans really have no excuse for winning a battle. We were pretty embarrassed for a while.

EGM: Is it possible to make a *Star Wars* game without a Hoth level?

Giz: [*Laughs*] You know, that's the question we've been asking ourselves. I don't know the answer to that. Do you? I'd ask you.

EGM: It's a little played out at this point. It was exciting back on the Nintendo 64....

Giz: Did you enjoy it in *Battlefront*?

EGM: Yeah, we didn't mind it so much, because it is one of a dozen stages that we're cycling through.

Giz: How about—I'm interviewing you now [*Laughs*]—how about a Hoth in next-gen glory?

EGM: Well, our big complaint about the Hoth level in any *Star Wars* game is that the AT-ATs don't feel big and intimidating. When you first saw one in *The Empire Strikes Back*, it was larger than life. When it stepped on the ground, the ground shook—it was *huge*. You never get that visceral feeling from any AT-AT in any videogame, ever. In *Battlefront* in particular, AT-ATs feel like toys. We're not game designers, so we don't know how you're going to make them that "big" without making everything else way too small.

Giz: You'd be amazed how small things look from the head of an AT-AT when you make one really big; they're just like these little ants running around.

EGM: So what would you do with a next-gen Hoth?

Giz: Can't answer that. [*Laughs*] But I think you and I are in line with a lot of what it needs to be...bigger, more epic.

EGM: Is there anything that's left to explore in the *Star Wars* universe? We've seen just about everything....

Giz: That's a question that I can't really answer. But all I can say is that the *Star Wars* universe is really vast, and I think that there are still a bunch of gameplay elements and *Star Wars* experiences that have yet to be tapped.

EGM: Will you be dipping into the written fiction?

Giz: Possibly...possibly that, possibly furthering the story, possibly looking into the past.... We're exploring a bunch of different options. There are a lot of exciting ways to play in this universe, as the other *Star Wars* games that came before us have shown. I think fans won't be disappointed with where this franchise goes.

EGM: Last question—did Boba Fett die in *Return of the Jedi*?

Giz: Absolutely not. Jetpacks! Jetpacks!

THE HOT SEAT: CHOOSE OR LOSE

We had to give poor Giz a break from the tough questions, so we stuck him in our Hot Seat...which must mean our "Hot Seat" isn't very hot, now that we think about it....

Cooler to Play As

☐ Yoda ☒ Boba Fett

Giz: "Hmm....ah...I'd have to say Boba Fett, just because he can fly."

Sci-fi Alternatives

☒ *Buck Rogers* ☐ *Battlestar Galactica*

Giz: "New *Battlestar Galactica*?" [*EGM*: "Let's go with old."] "I'd have to say *Buck Rogers*, then. But I'd take new *Battlestar Galactica* over either of those two."

Needs Genocidin'

☐ Ewoks ☒ Gungans

Giz: "With Ewoks, at least I don't understand what they're saying."

OLD REPUBLIC, JADE EMPIRE) WRITING CONTEST. CHECK OUT THE DEVELOPER'S WEBSITE, WWW.BIOWARE.COM, FOR MORE DETAILS.... >>

THE SALES CHARTS | FOR OCTOBER 2005

TOP 10 BEST-SELLING GAMES

SOCOM 3's soldiers are ready to shoot anyone who approaches the "Pimp-vee."

1 **SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy SEALs** • PS2 • Sony
2 **NBA Live 06** • PS2 • EA Sports
3 **Madden NFL 06** • PS2 • EA Sports
4 **Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories** • PSP • Rockstar
5 **Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi** • PS2 • Atari
6 **Pokémon XD: Gale of Darkness** • GC • Nintendo
7 **FIFA Soccer 06** • PS2 • EA Sports
8 **Sly 3: Honor Among Thieves** • PS2 • Sony
9 **The Warriors** • PS2 • Rockstar
10 **Shadow of the Colossus** • PS2 • Sony

Source: NPD TRSTS Video Games Service. Call (516) 625-6190 for questions regarding this list

TOP 10 PS2

1 **SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy SEALs**
2 **NBA Live 06**
3 **Madden NFL 06**
4 **Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi**
5 **FIFA Soccer 06**
6 **Sly 3: Honor Among Thieves**
7 **The Warriors**
8 **Shadow of the Colossus**
9 **Tony Hawk's American Wasteland**
10 **Soul Calibur III**

TOP 10 XBOX

1 **Far Cry Instincts**
2 **NBA Live 06**
3 **Madden NFL 06**
4 **Blitz: The League**
5 **The Warriors**
6 **Battlefield 2: Modern Combat**
7 **Tony Hawk's American Wasteland**
8 **X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apoc.**
9 **FIFA Soccer 06**
10 **Tiger Woods PGA Tour 06**

TOP 10 GAMECUBE

1 **Pokémon XD: Gale of Darkness**
2 **Mario Superstar Baseball**
3 **Fire Emblem: Path of Radiance**
4 **DDR: Mario Mix**
5 **Madagascar**
6 **Ultimate Spider-Man**
7 **Super Mario Sunshine**
8 **Spongebob Squarepants: BFBB**
9 **Madden NFL 06**
10 **Super Smash Bros. Melee**

TOP 10 PORTABLES

1 **GTA: Liberty City Stories** • PSP
2 **Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow** • DS
3 **Nintendogs: Dachshund** • DS
4 **Madden NFL 06** • PSP
5 **Nintendogs: Labrador** • DS
6 **Pokémon Emerald** • GBA
7 **Nintendogs: Chihuahua** • DS
8 **Marvel Nemesis: ROTI** • PSP
9 **NBA Live 06** • PSP
10 **Bratz: Rock Angelz** • GBA

TOP 10 RENTALS

FOR THE WEEK ENDING 11/13/05

1 **Gun** • PS2
2 **Gun** • XB
3 **The Matrix: Path of Neo** • PS2
4 **Call of Duty: Big Red One** • PS2
5 **The Matrix: Path of Neo** • XB
6 **Tony Hawk's Am. Wasteland** • PS2
7 **Dragon Ball Z: Budo. Ten.** • PS2
8 **Call of Duty: Big Red One** • XB
9 **Madden NFL 06** • PS2
10 **The Warriors** • PS2

Source: Blockbuster Video

WHAT'S PLAYING IN THE COMPUTER GAMING WORLD

Officially out of fashion in '06: splitters (folks who insist on separating shooting from strategy, and so on and so forth). Instead of serving FPSes, RPGs, and RTSes straight up, the new year's new breed of genre-bending games lumps this with that and the other thing.

Enemy Territory: Quake Wars

Ubisoft's ***Dark Messiah of Might and Magic*** (spring) mashes first-person perspective's immersion and more immediate interface with the stat building and storytelling of a proper role-playing game. Similarly themed ***Savage 2*** (fall) crams the stuff of desktop dictatorship in the same crucible as third- and first-person hack-n-slash. Same story with ***Enemy Territory: Quake Wars*** (fall), an online army-versus-army shooter set in the same universe as its namesake and in which borglike strogg battle flesh-and-blood humans. Split second reflexes and steady aim matter, but no more than the mobile bunkers, missile silos, and plasma mortars you build. Bring it all to nerve-jarring life with next-gen graphics, and you've got a "Game of the Year" hopeful.

Huxley

And finally, some good news for the PC-phobic: Massively multiplayer online first-person shooter ***Huxley*** (fall) is headed the 360's way as well. Thousands of wired citizens inhabit its cities of tomorrow, hobnobbing and bartering, forming clans and cooperating in quests. And they compete, too...120 at a time. In order to keep their power-parched metropolis up and running, residents of one city must trek to outlying mining stations to clash with those of another.

—Shawn Elliott,
Computer Gaming World

>> REALLY BIG NUMBERS—SONY ANNOUNCED THAT IT HAS NOW SHIPPED 100 MILLION PLAYSTATION 2 UNITS SINCE MARCH 2000.... >>

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Media Manager

PSP™ (PlayStation®Portable)

Media Manager

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like.no.other™

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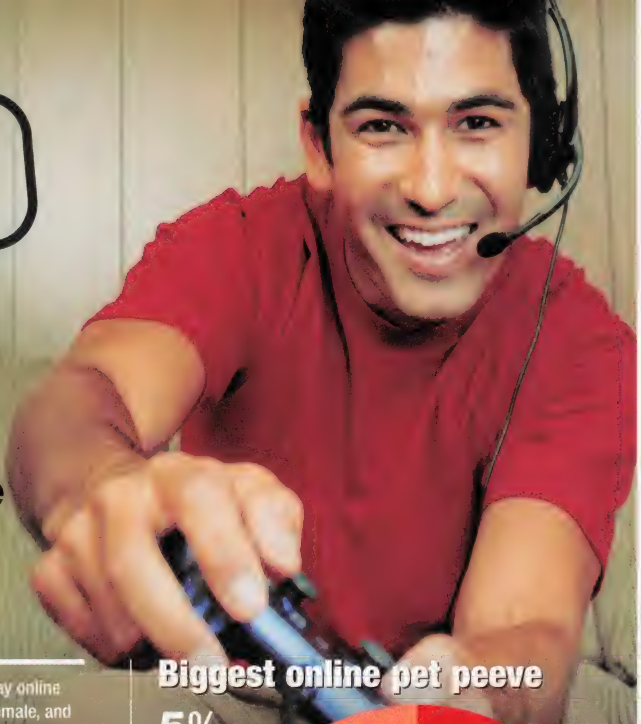
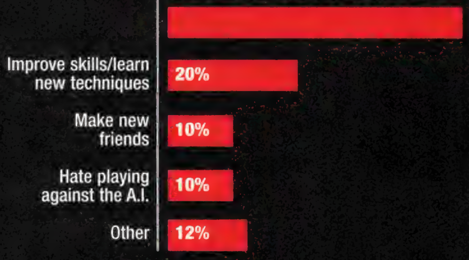
ONLINE THIS MONTH

We polled more than 1,100 people about their online gaming habits. Survey says...



6% of males say they play online pretending to be a female, and **1%** of females say they play online pretending to be a male

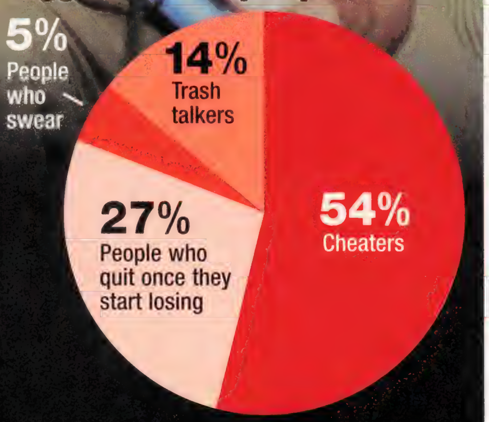
48% say "fresh competition" is their **main motivation for playing online**



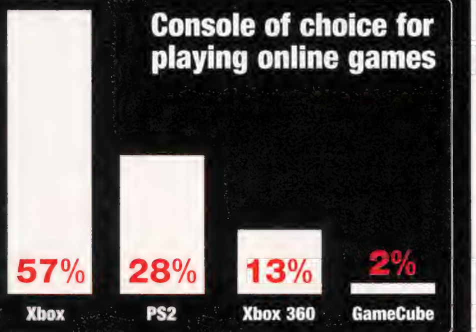
5% say they have cheated at least once when playing online

20% say they have **flirted** with someone when playing online

Biggest online pet peeve



Console of choice for playing online games



7% say they play online while **in the nude**

74%	Street clothes
10%	Underoos
9%	Leisure suits

#$*! **37%** say they trash talk when playing online

WHAT'S UP AT 1UP.com

1UP
COMPETITION
1UP DAILY: NEWS, UPDATES, AND OPINION
HOT REVIEWS

EGM.1UP.COM
When *EGM* first started, we published the mag with rocks and the blood of our slain enemies. Since then, the advances in technology are staggering, and it's no more apparent than at this website. It's where we put things that just won't fit in print, such as our Afterthoughts interview with *King Kong* maker Michel Ancel, in which he tells us how the great ape can land you chicks.

CHEATS.1UP.COM
Those who use cheats prefer to call them "tips" or "hints." If you're looking for those (or you're self-actualized enough to call them "cheats"), you'll find them right here.

GAMETAB.COM
Say hello to the newest member of our family, GameTab.com. Not only does it collect all the news from the major gaming websites, but it can also tell you the aggregate review score of every release—from *Project Gotham Racing 3* to *Elf Bowling 1&2*.

XBOX360.1UP.COM
Missed our *Madden NFL 06* review? Or want to see if your copies of *Kung Fu Chaos* and *Drake* can play on Microsoft's next-gen machine? Then peep this website for all things Xbox 360, including reviews, news, updated backward-compatibility lists, and much more.

Featured Blog: John Tam
That *Guitar Hero* game has taken the entire *EGM* staff by storm. So we're always happy to read what John Tam, maker of *Guitar Hero* and lead designer of that bitchin' controller, has to say in his online diary at **armad1ll0.1UP.com**.

>> UBISOFT'S MONTREAL STUDIO (*PRINCE OF PERSIA*) REPORTEDLY HAS FOUR UNANNOUNCED NEXT-GEN TITLES IN DEVELOPMENT.... >>

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PS2/XB FIRST LOOK

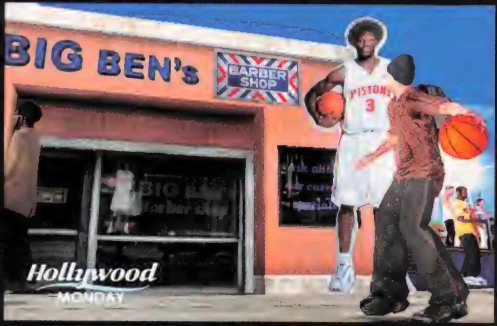
NBA BALLERS: PHENOM

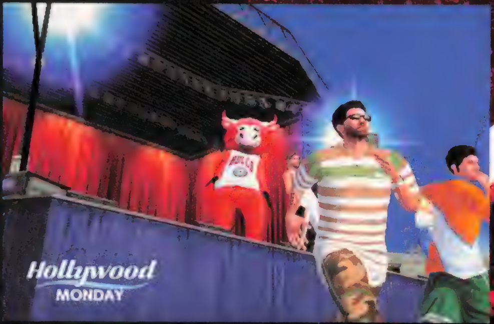
Publisher: Midway
Developer: Midway
Release Date: Spring 2006

That's sure one big game of roundball

OK, so the mature nature of the *Grand Theft Auto* franchise has ticked off plenty of parents, politicians, and one loony lawyer from Florida. But once you look past the controversy, you'll see a series that helped raise our expectations for videogames today, in particular with its go-anywhere, do-anything environments.

Finally, this massive ingredient in *GTA*'s winning formula is finding its way into a sports title. *NBA Ballers: Phenom*, the follow-up to Midway's arcade-rich hoopster, will make the entire city of Los Angeles—including downtown, Beverly Hills, and Hollywood—your playground. And surprisingly, you'll be spending almost as much time off the court as you do on it. ***—Bryan Intihar***

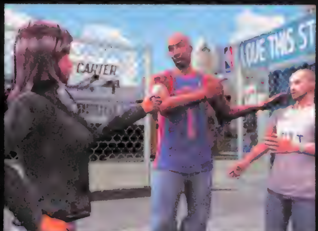




Welcome to the City of Angels

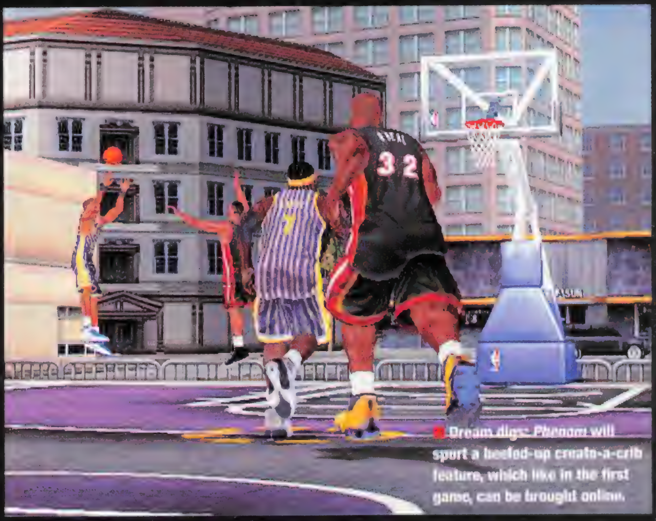
Just like any *GTA* metropolis, *Phenom*'s version of Los Angeles is full of life. "The game is set during a fictional NBA Finals week, so everyone is there, including the 'who's who' of NBA athletes, music celebrities, coaches, agents, and media," says Executive Producer George Gomez. "You can walk around several L.A. neighborhoods and interact with people, stores, and vendors." Aside from chitchatting with the city's beautiful people or shopping for some new duds, you can cruise the streets looking for extracurricular activities, such as snapping pictures of pro players and working a charity car wash with those sexy Laker Girls. Photography? Charity work? Sounds kinda lame, you say? Gomez promises that won't be the case. "Once you see these events, I think they'll make you smile and I doubt that you'll think of them as 'cheesy,'" he says. "We are trying to create a rich environment that will allow you many choices. Some of the choices are more oriented toward performance in the game, and some are there simply for the exploration and entertainment value."

Speaking of choices, each one you make along the way will greatly affect the game's outcome. One possible scenario has you winding up the No. 1 pick in the next NBA draft, while another puts you at the helm of an entertainment empire, splitting time playing ball with movie shoots, record labels, and designing your own clothing line. "We have a Career Aptitude meter on your bio page that always tells you exactly what direction you're headed," says Designer Johnny Vignocchi. "The mechanic is similar to what you see in modern role-playing games like *Fable* and *Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic*."



>> UBISOFT HAS TASKED DEVELOPER FREE RADICAL DESIGN (*TIMESPLITTERS*) WITH MAKING A NEXT-GEN ACTION GAME. ACCORDING TO THE

Illustration by Tim Marrs



Dream digs: *Phenom* will sport a beefed-up create-a-crib feature, which like in the first game, can be brought online.

Getting noticed

Long before Ervin Johnson became "Magic," Michael became "Air Jordan," and LeBron became "King James," these basketball superstars spent years proving themselves on the court. Luckily, things happen much faster on the videogame hardwood. In *Phenom*, you've got only one week to show the roundball community that you're the real deal. "The player arrives [in Los Angeles] with nothing but his skills and his desire to make his mark," says Gomez. "The week-long battle includes an old-time rivalry, a lost love, mentors, coaches, distractions, and maybe even a new love."

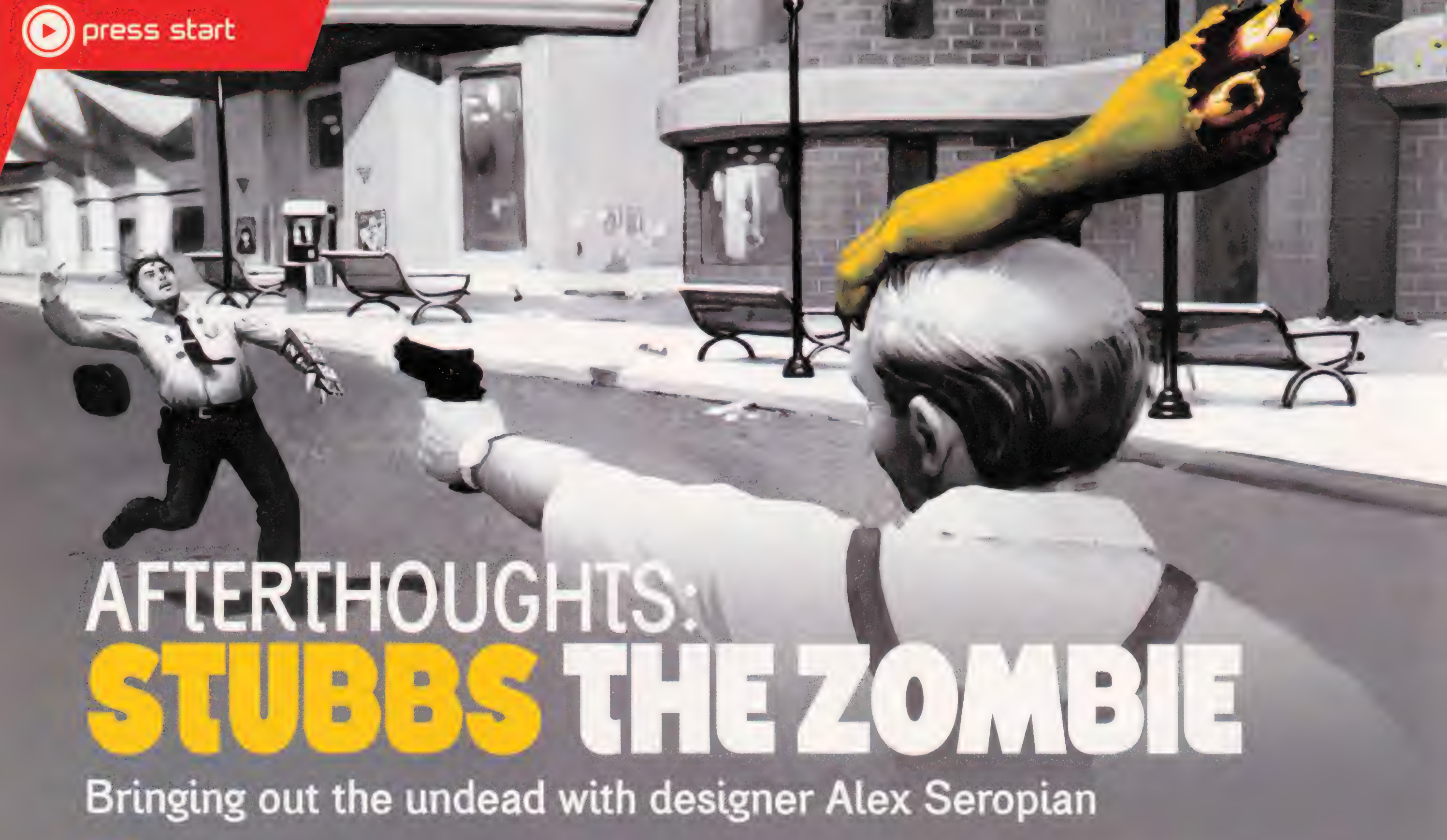
From the outset, you'll walk around town and choose which pro-am tourneys to enter (you can also head to LAX and fly to venues in other cities). Obviously, victories will improve your rep. In addition, you'll earn clothing and equipment that can help—and hinder—your abilities. "As the player grows his collection of special gear, he'll make his own choices about what gear to equip because not all of it is purely beneficial," explains Gomez. "Shaq's 'Diesel' sneakers increase the players shot blocking and low-post offense, but reduce his long-range shooting attribute. The player will have to judge what's best for his own style." You can also hone your skills via assorted minigames, including Shootout, which tests whether you can sink jumpers under the pressure of a time limit and a defender all up in your grill. And remember those questionable off-the-court side missions? They might factor into wins and losses, too; completing certain tasks will help you build friendships with certain NBA players and celebrities, who may eventually become your teammates in the new 2-on-2 matchups (the original *Ballers* only featured 1-on-1 play). See, car washes are about more than staring at soapy T and A.

Hollywood
MONDAY

For Ballers on the Go

On the same day *Phenom* hits your console, Midway will bring *NBA Ballers: Rebound* to the PlayStation Portable. It's basically the same game as the original console installment (which earned a Silver Award in *EGM*), but it comes packed with a few new minigames (like DunkFest), fantasy courts, and NBA players, including the Heat's high-flyer Dwyane Wade and the Bulls' three-point artist Ben Gordon.

PRESS RELEASE, THE GAME WILL "TARGET MATURE GAMERS [AND] FEATURE DIFFICULT STRATEGIC CHOICES AND MORAL DILEMMAS".... >>



AFTERTHOUGHTS: STUBBS THE ZOMBIE

Bringing out the undead with designer Alex Seropian

How many chain-smoking, sheep-riding, redneck-possessing zombies stalk the streets of Cold War–era America in videogames these days? Just one, unfortunately, and his name is Stubbs. His game, *Stubbs the Zombie in Rebel Without a Pulse* (XB), is the product of several new ideas in videogame development, chief among them the Fart button. But almost as impressive is the way *Stubbs* was made, built on the cheap by a tiny group of designers using the *Halo* engine. Alex Seropian's team at Wideload outsourced the technical stuff, which freed them up to concentrate on the creative elements. Mission accomplished. *—Robert Ashley*

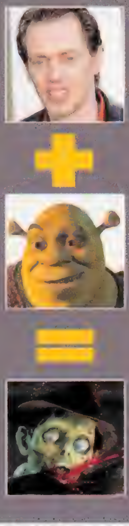
EGM: Where did you get the ideas for Stubbs' unique "abilities"?

Alex Seropian: I always wanted to make a game where you could fart. That was it—no, it's funny. Part of the way we do design work—we design a lot of games—[is that] we do a lot of high-level one-page treatments. I went back and looked at the original one-pager for *Stubbs* not too long ago. And what was funny about the one-pager versus what we shipped is that the mechanics are basically what we thought of from the very beginning, but the story is entirely different. The story was entirely changed around, but you could possess guys by throwing your hand on their head, or use the old flatulence, or throw your guts as a grenade.

EGM: And yet you were using the *Halo* engine. How'd you fuse such diverse elements?

AS: Some things in the *Halo* engine work really, really, really well—like the aiming system and the way range combat works.... We were trying to make a game that was completely different, right? But there is shooting in our game, so if it ain't broke, don't fix it. We want to do stuff that is different, that is original. But I think the key to doing that is that you have to start with some common reference point. Otherwise, it's just too weird.

EGM: Speaking of weird, Stubbs must have been a tough character to create. He's entirely gruesome, yet truly likable.



AS: If you really think that, then I'm so flattered, 'cause that's exactly what we tried to do. It was so hard to do. We honestly spent six months developing this character, and at a certain point halfway through, we thought we were blowing it. We had gone through 300 concepts of this guy, and we hadn't nailed it yet. I'm glad we spent all that time, though. We had a bit of writer's block when we'd gotten about halfway through, so we brought in about 10 concept guys, and we had them all start doing their own ideas while we were piling in all kinds of reference art, from pictures of Steve Buscemi to Shrek, and we got this huge cross section of ideas for [Stubbs]. It's exactly how you said: How do you make a monster that you can like?

EGM: Stubbs is a perfect foil to the regular people in the game and their McCarthy-era conformity. Was that intentional?

AS: That contrast is really important. We thought it was funny to set the game in this utopian city in that utopian era, and to give the player a chance to destroy it. You know, everything is too good, too clean, too perfect, too happy. We wanted to let you wipe the smile off their face.

EGM: You left an established developer, Bungie, to pursue a new, cheaper production model—and you turned around *Stubbs* in record time. Do you think you'll be doing it this way from now on?

AS: Absolutely. You know, [during the production of *Stubbs*,] I'd get calls from my buddies in the industry all the time saying, "So, how goes your experiment?" I would just give the stock answer: "Oh, it's going great"—regardless of how it was really going. But what better answer to that question than to be able to ship a game that way, a game that I think is pretty decent. And we're already working on the next game, so we loved the way the whole process worked. The coolest side effect of the whole thing is the work environment. We're all in one big room, and if anybody has an idea, they can share it.

EGM: The soundtrack is really awesome, but a lot of the time you don't hear music as you're playing. Why didn't more of the songs make it into the actual game?

AS: We love the soundtrack too, but we really wanted to use music in the game in a way that wasn't just laid over the action. The songs play in appropriate places in the game, like in a jukebox and so on. It would have been cool to have the opportunity to build in more places for the soundtrack music, but the way it worked out was the way it worked out.

EGM: It almost seems like the details that you sampled from *Halo*—the grenades, the vehicles, the big explosions, and so on—are what people love to put in Internet videos. Were you hoping tap into that fan-created video craze?

AS: I don't think there was ever a meeting where someone said, "Let's make zombies blow up like this so people will want to show that in videos." But we were all aware of things like the Warthog Jump video and its progeny, and we all sort of expected that some devious person would be doing something bizarre with our game eventually—a flatulent zombie in a tank gives the prospective video maker a lot of ammo.

>> THE OFT-DELAYED *STATE OF EMERGENCY 2* WILL RIOT ON YOUR PS2 IN FEBRUARY. ALSO, A PSP VERSION IS PLANNED FOR THE FALL.... >>

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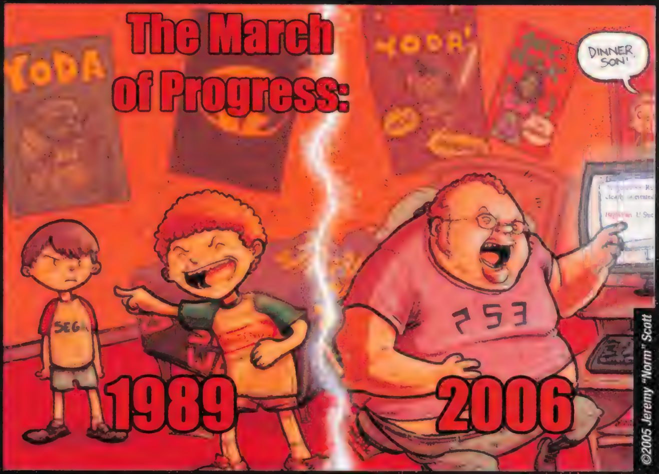
OVERHEARD

Oh no he di-int!


The March of Progress:
YODA
YODA!
DINNER SON!
SEGA
753
1989
2006

©2005 Jeremy "Norm" Scott

"Hopefully, it won't suck."

—*Lord of the Rings* trilogy *and* King Kong *director Peter Jackson discusses the* Halo *movie, which begins filming in 2006. He's working on the project as a producer*

"Just because it is rated Mature doesn't mean you shouldn't buy it for your kids. Play the game and explain to them what they are playing."

—*Rapper 50 Cent, ignoring the real reason why you shouldn't buy his game,* 50 Cent: Bulletproof, *for anyone (check our review on page 106)*

"Maybe there's a code you need to enter to **unlock the next-gen graphics.**"

—*EGM previews editor Shane Bettenhausen sees the Xbox 360 version of* NBA 2K6 *for the first time*

"It is Microsoft. And **I will kill them.**"

—*Sony Computer Entertainment President and CEO Ken Kutaragi, asked in 1994 who he thought the biggest competition would be for his upcoming PlayStation game console*

"**The best title ever made** in the history of U.S. videogaming was ***DragonStomper.***"

—*From an article titled "Xbox 360 has nothing on the Atari 2600" on Forbes.com. Seriously. We're not joking. The full article is even worse. With all due respect (which is to say, no respect at all), maybe Forbes.com should stick to worshipping CEOs and pork belly futures or whatever the hell it is they do over there*

■ **Ladies and gentlemen, Forbes.com's greatest game ever made in all its glory.**

"I always wanted to have a custom-sized screen that wasn't the typical four-cornered cathode-ray-tube TV. I've always thought that **games would eventually break free of the confines of a TV screen** to fill an entire room. But I would rather not say anything more about that."

—*Mario creator Shigeru Miyamoto stops talking about what he thinks games will be like in the future just when it was starting to get good*

"Sadly, most people won't take the time to look past the surface, the fiction, the context [of *Grand Theft Auto*]. **They don't see the fun and the freedom the game provides.** They see carjackings and gun battles and hookers. You can talk about game design genius 'til you're blue in the face—the people who want to regulate games, and the mainstream audience we want to reach, will ignore you."

—*Game designer Warren Spector* (Deus Ex, Thief) *has a point*

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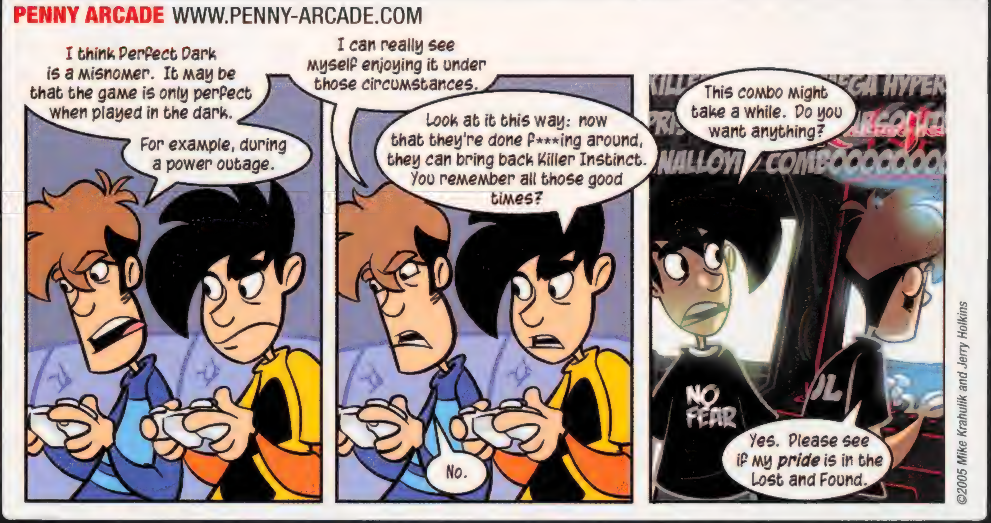
I think Perfect Dark is a misnomer. It may be that the game is only perfect when played in the dark.
For example, during a power outage.
I can really see myself enjoying it under those circumstances.
Look at it this way: now that they're done f***ing around, they can bring back Killer Instinct. You remember all those good times?
No.
This combo might take a while. Do you want anything?
Yes. Please see if my pride is in the Lost and Found.
COMBOOOOOOOO
NO FEAR

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>> MTV PICKED UP THE FILM RIGHTS TO *MARC ECKO'S GETTING UP: CONTENTS UNDER PRESSURE* (PS2/XB). STARS AND DATE ARE STILL TBD.... >>

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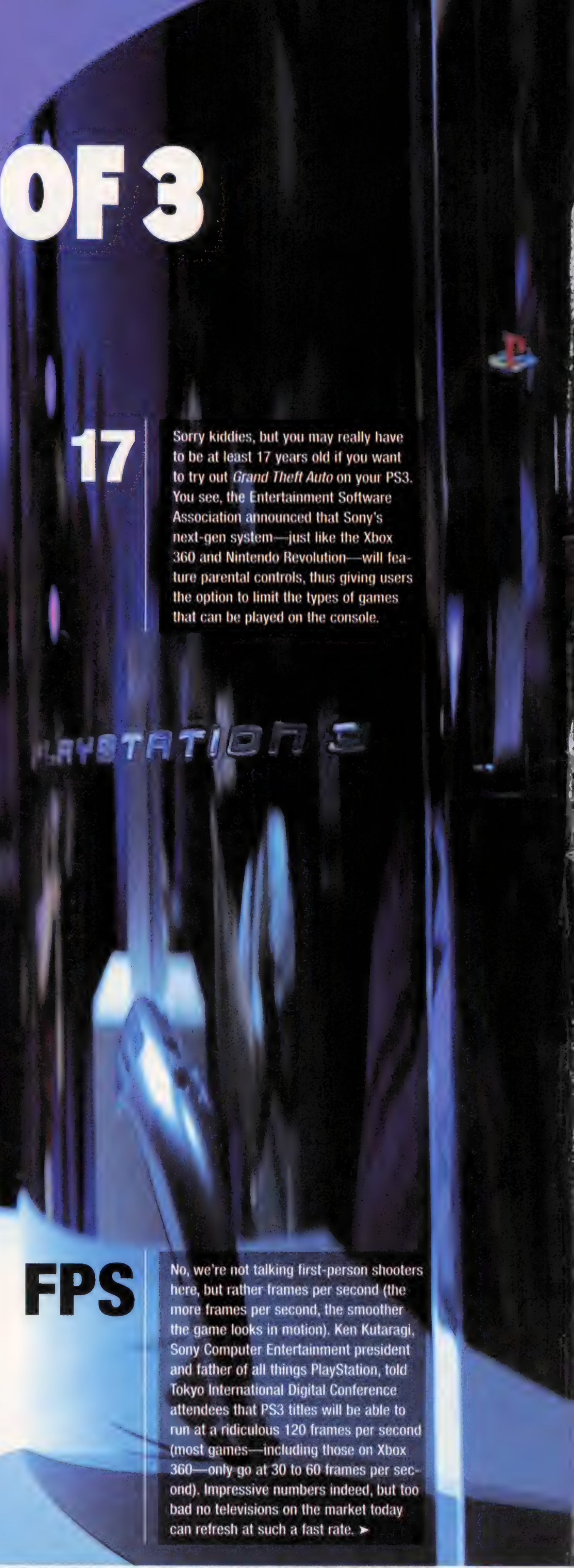
THE POWER OF 3

Another update on Sony's next-gen dream machine, PlayStation 3

Let 'er rip: With the recent launch of the Xbox 360, the first actual shot in the next-gen war has finally been fired. Still, we all know this fight won't have much bloodshed until Sony brings out its big gun, PlayStation 3 (not to mention Nintendo's remote-controlled Revolution). The current console leader remains hush-hush on a specific release date and cost for its much-anticipated system, yet most industry experts are predicting that the PS3 will land on U.S. store shelves in fall 2006 with a price tag of at least 400 smackers. So as we wait for Sony to start talkin', chew on these PS3 updates.

—Bryan Intihar



17

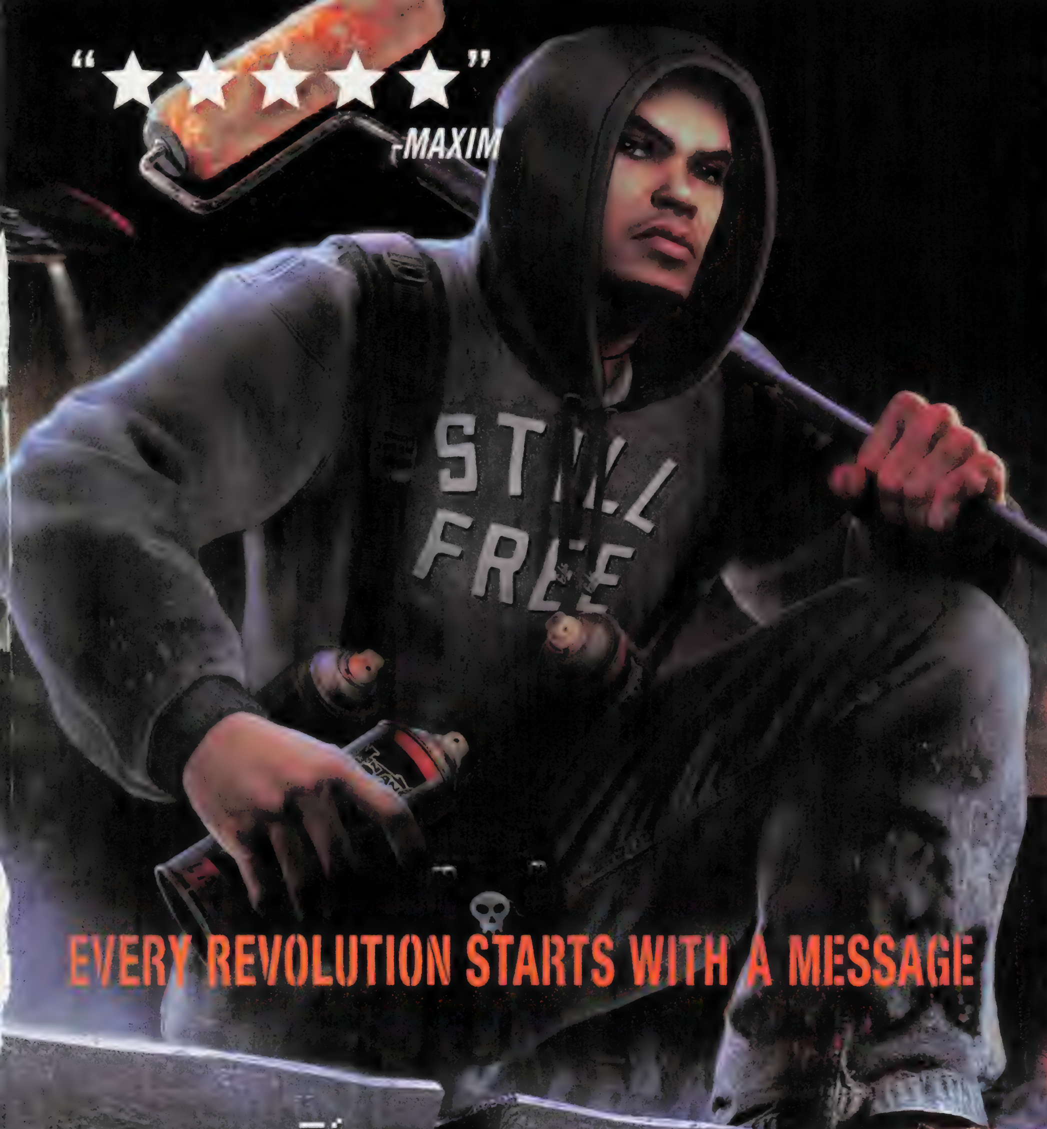
Sorry kiddies, but you may really have to be at least 17 years old if you want to try out *Grand Theft Auto* on your PS3. You see, the Entertainment Software Association announced that Sony's next-gen system—just like the Xbox 360 and Nintendo Revolution—will feature parental controls, thus giving users the option to limit the types of games that can be played on the console.

"Ah, now this is next generation," said esteemed developer Hideo Kojima on his blog to describe the reaction of the *Metal Gear Solid 4* staff after they saw a new supersecretive mechanic being used in this PS3 stealth-espionage title. "With this in place, we'll introduce a new concept that's different from any previous *MGS*," added Kojima. "If it works out, I'm positive it'll also be a first for the industry. It'll reflect well on the gameplay, too." The man sure knows how to tease us....

FPS

No, we're not talking first-person shooters here, but rather frames per second (the more frames per second, the smoother the game looks in motion). Ken Kutaragi, Sony Computer Entertainment president and father of all things PlayStation, told Tokyo International Digital Conference attendees that PS3 titles will be able to run at a ridiculous 120 frames per second (most games—including those on Xbox 360—only go at 30 to 60 frames per second). Impressive numbers indeed, but too bad no televisions on the market today can refresh at such a fast rate. ➤

>> *MARIO* CREATOR SHIGERU MIYAMOTO RECENTLY SAID THAT THE NINTENDO REVOLUTION HAS ONE MORE SECRET YET TO BE REVEALED.... >>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THE POWER OF 3 (CONT.)

PlayStation Live?

Even though Sony is winning the current console war without breaking a sweat, Microsoft's Xbox Live service—with its 2 million-plus subscribers and ease of use—is dominating the online space. What will Sony's strategy be this go-around? "When we launch a PS3 online service, we certainly want to take advantage of the PS3, the technology it brings, and offer a great online experience for PS3 users," said Sony Computer Entertainment America President Kaz Hirai in a recent interview with our sister publication *Official U.S. PlayStation Magazine*. "But at the same time, we want to make sure we bring along the huge install base of PS2 users and the install base of PSP users and have them be able to take part in the online experience as well." An integrated online network for the entire PlayStation family sounds like a step in the right direction, but can Sony actually make it happen? The company's been giving us the same song and dance for two years now.

5,

as in *Virtua Fighter 5*, which Sega has confirmed for the PS3 (it might even end up exclusive to the console). The technically savvy fighter is currently being tested in Japanese arcades, and aside from the much slicker eye candy, players are digging the game's new Dodge button.

■ *Madden NFL 06*

Shortcuts

Some sports developers who wished to remain anonymous tell us that the brand-new game engines they just created for Xbox 360 titles will also be used in creating the PS3 installments (in a nutshell, it would be a waste of development dollars and time to start from scratch again). So don't expect too many differences between sports titles on either platform.

■ *NBA Live 06*

Fire!

Zero Point Software recently revealed its debut title, *Project IM*. This futuristic first-person shooter will come to both PS3 and Xbox 360, and it's already being billed as the first game in a trilogy. *Mass Effect*, *Too Human*, and now *Project IM*—apparently, trilogies are the hot next-gen trend.

>> MOVING TO JAPAN? IF SO, CHECK OUT SONY'S GAME YAROZE! PROGRAM, WHICH ASKS PEOPLE TO SUBMIT GAME PITCHES FOR PS3.... >>

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THE RUMOR MILL

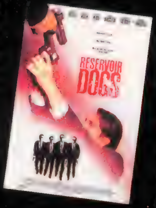
200 issues haven't slowed down our chatterbox

Well, here we are—the big two-zero-zero. I still can't believe that yours truly has been dishing the videogame dirt for 17 years now. That's a lot of damn rumors, people. Sure, I've had my share of embarrassing misses along the way (check out page 120), but I've also had plenty of mind-exploding, universe-shattering predictions that came true. Got any fond Q-Mann memories? Send them to quartermann@ziffdavis.com. I'm all for reminiscing....

—The Q

Massively multiplayer hobbits

Action, role-playing, turn-based strategy—The *Lord of the Rings* franchise has found its way into several genres (with varying results). Next up: the massively multiplayer online role-playing sector. Yep, **a *Lord of the Rings*–based MMORPG (supposedly subtitled *The White Council*) is heading to PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360**. You can start looking for your long-lost hobbit love in Middle-earth during 2007.



Colorless

It's been almost three years since publisher SCi announced a game based on Quentin Tarantino's first big flick, *Reservoir Dogs*. Well, I've got some good and bad news concerning the project: ***Reservoir Dogs* will finally bloody up the PS2 and Xbox in 2006, but it won't feature any of the actors' voices or likenesses**. No Steve Buscemi as Mr. Pink? Lame.

Spinning another web

Q-Mann fact: Back in the day when my gossiping was limited to the playground, I had a bit of an obsession with Marvel's friendly neighborhood superhero (and I've got the Underoos to prove it). So yeah, I'm very glad to see that ***Ultimate Spider-Man 2* will swing to next-gen consoles this fall**. Just one request: Make the game longer than five hours, will ya?

Online attraction

OK, I know last issue's entry concerning the Revolution's questionable graphics irritated quite a few rabid fanboys. Buck up, little campers—I'm about to turn those frowns upside down. The Q's hearing that **several developers (including those in the PC community) who mostly make online games want to work on Nintendo's next-gen console**. Happy now?

Handheld war

As much as I beg for additional original PlayStation Portable titles, it appears my pleas are falling on deaf ears. So it shouldn't come as much of a surprise that another well-known videogame franchise, ***Medal of Honor*, will soon fight the good fight on Sony's handheld**. Oh well, at least this military first-person shooter will have online play (a feature I wish more PSP games would start including).

BITS OF Q

- Publisher THQ is prepping **a sequel to *Destroy All Humans!*** But Pandemic, developer of the first game, won't make it.
- The Wild West–set ***Gun* is receiving a follow-up**. Expect this one to mosey on over to next-gen consoles at the end of 2006.
- This spring, you might see an **Xbox 360 version of *True Crime: New York City***. Hopefully, they'll fix all the problems found in the current-gen edition.

■ A *Destroy All Humans!* sequel? Yeah, when cows fly. Huh? Wait a sec....

>> IN MARCH, *MAJOR LEAGUE BASEBALL 2K6* HEADS TO THE PS2, XBOX, AND GAMECUBE DIAMONDS. A 360 VERSION WILL COME LATER.... >>

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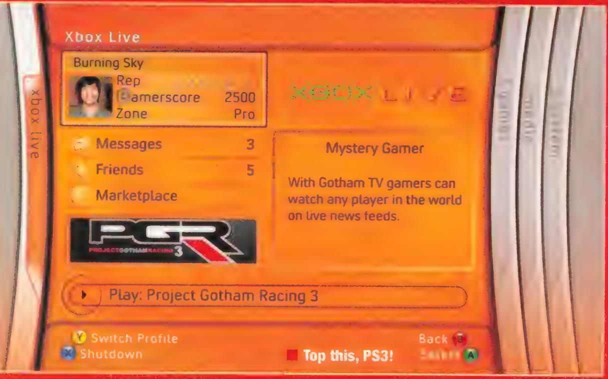
THE HOT 10

Ten things to care about because we say so



Mystery Gamer

With Gotham TV gamers can watch any player in the world on live news feeds.

■ Top this, PS3!

1 XBOX LIVE ON 360

Downloadable game demos, the all-new spectator mode, chatting with a friend while he's watching a DVD and you're racking up *Project Gotham Racing 3* kudos—Microsoft's online service is definitely next gen. As for most of the 360 launch titles...well, not so much.

2 XBOX LIVE ARCADE

Perfect Dark Zero: The Xbox 360's killer app? Pfft. We'd rather download (for a small fee) and play *Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved* or the original *Gauntlet* any day of the week.

3 TIVO ONPSP

Need to catch up on your *Laguna Beach* episodes? Starting in the spring, an enhanced TiVoToGo feature will allow you to transfer recorded programs to the PlayStation Portable.

4 THE "BLUE SKY IN GAMES" CAMPAIGN

Those jokers at UK Resistance (ukresistance.co.uk) are offering some sound advice to developers. For example: "Games need BLUE SKIES! Games need BRIGHT YELLOW SUNS! Games need RED AND BLUE THINGS in them! We want to play in a HAPPY PRETEND LAND, not a s*** version of an American slum full of mixed-race gangsters wearing licensed sportswear." Amen.

5 360 ITUNES

Head to www.hymn-project.com to download this easy-to-use software that converts your pre-iTunes 6.0 music into unprotected MP3s that will play on your Xbox 360 (both ways: through your home network or iPod). Thanks to reader Steven Doran for the heads-up.

■ Junk mail, watch your back.

6 HOMEMADE PLASMA SWORD LETTER OPENER

Paying bills sucks. But as a dedicated *Halo 2* fan shows us, at least one part—the opening portion—can be satisfying.

7 SELLING YOUR LAUNCH SYSTEM FOR BIG BUCKS ON EBAY

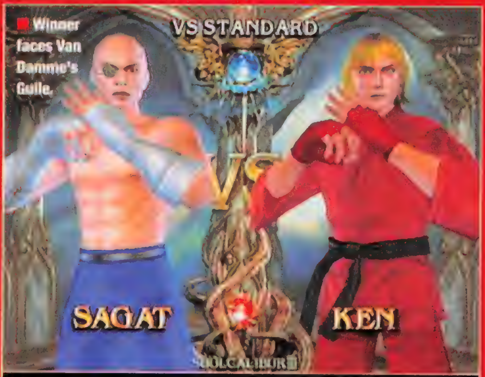
Capitalism at its finest....

8 D_SKIN

It really stings when you lend a game disc to a friend, only to have him or her scratch the hell out of it. So slap on these protective sheets and problem solved. Plus, you don't have to remove them to play that valuable copy of *The Guy Game*.

9 FATHER VIDEOGAME GETS HIS DUE

President George Bush recently announced that Ralph Baer, who basically created the videogame, is one of the recipients of the 2004 National Medal of Technology. And it's about freakin' time....

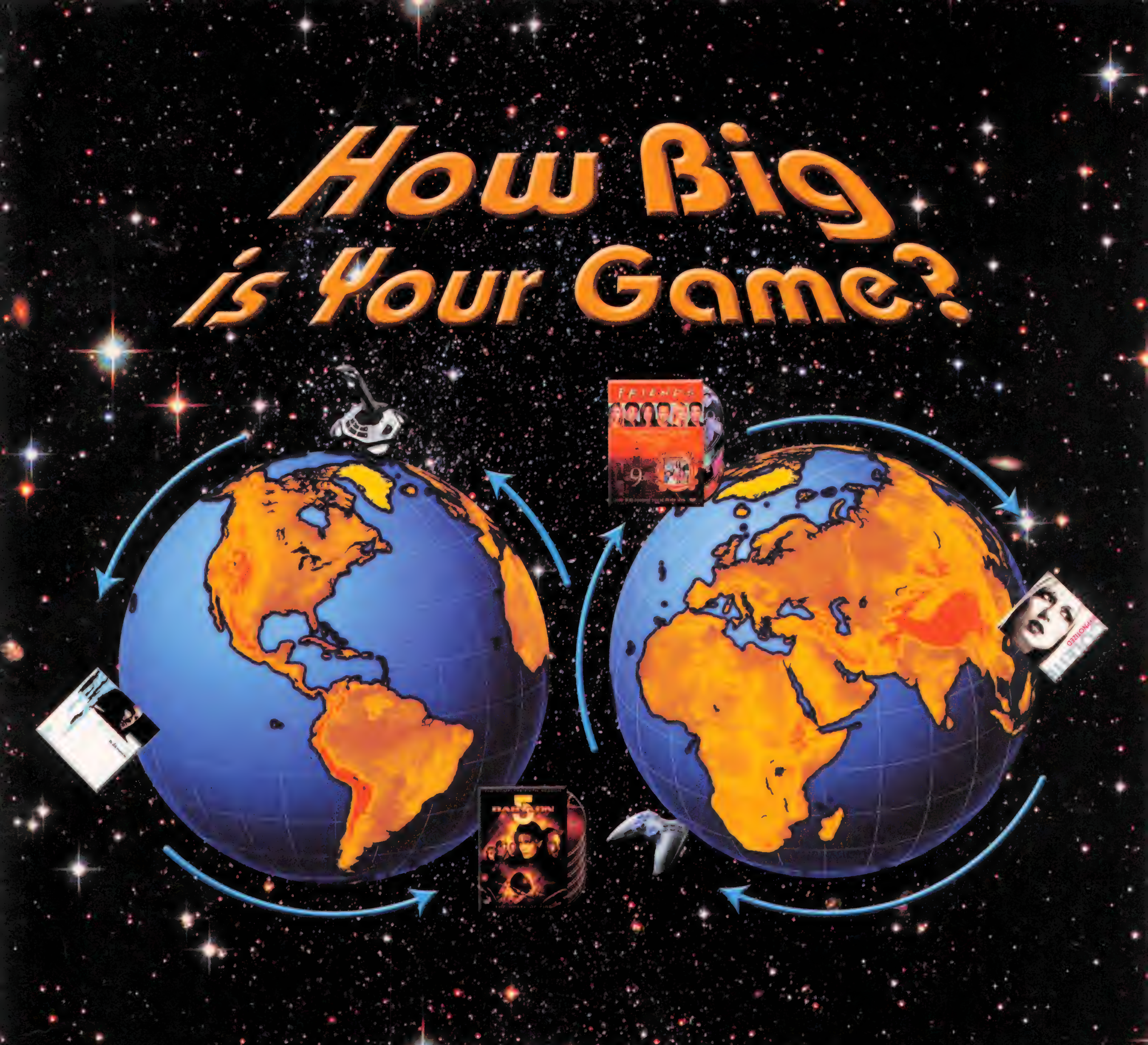


■ Winner faces Van Damme's Guile.

10 SOUL CALIBUR III CUSTOM CHARACTERS

It'll be hard to beat this fan's *Street Fighter* clash, but give it your best shot (and e-mail us the pics at EGM@ziffdavis.com).

>> GYMNASTICS, ANYONE? SEGA HAS PICKED UP THE RIGHTS TO MAKE THE OFFICIAL GAME OF THE 2008 BEIJING SUMMER OLYMPICS.... >>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HIGH-DEF DEFINED

We drop science on the four families of HDTV, along with five buying tips all gamers should know

That sales guy in the TV aisle is starting to think you're stalking him. You've been staring at his goods for the past year, hemming and hawing over blowing your dough on a high-definition television. And now that the Xbox 360 has launched and the PlayStation 3 is on the way—both systems built for HDTV gaming—it's time to commit.

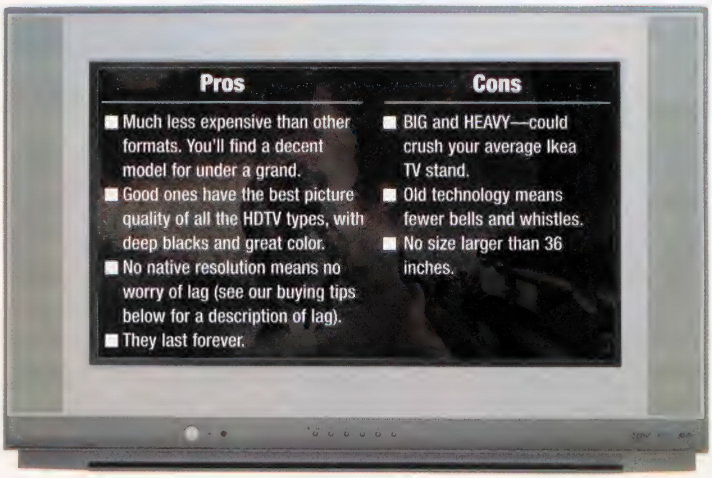
Unfortunately, although they're cheaper than ever, HDTVs aren't so easy to shop for. You can drown in a sea of set types, all emblazoned with letters and numbers that don't mean much to the normal earthman (we translate all this alien lingo in a glossary on the opposite page). So before you creep out the sales guy one more time, arm yourself with info from our guide to the HDTV varieties.

—Marc Camron

Direct-view CRT

CHEAPEST

These are the boob tubes you grew up with: big CRTs stuck in bigger boxes. The technology is on the way out but still represents a good entry-level HDTV value for gamers without deep pockets or the need for a hyper-large screen.



Pros	Cons
Much less expensive than other formats. You'll find a decent model for under a grand. Good ones have the best picture quality of all the HDTV types, with deep blacks and great color. No native resolution means no worry of lag (see our buying tips below for a description of lag). They last forever.	BIG and HEAVY—could crush your average Ikea TV stand. Old technology means fewer bells and whistles. No size larger than 36 inches.

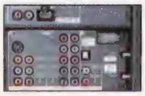
SPY BEFORE YOU BUY: FIVE ESSENTIAL SHOPPING TIPS...

1 Consider your potential HDTV's resolution: the number of horizontal lines the TV supports. The higher the number, the better the picture. To qualify for HDTV, the set must be at least 720p (the "p" stands for "progressive scan"—see our glossary), which is the standard resolution for Xbox 360 games. Sets that support 1080i (the "i" stands for "interlaced") have been available for a while, and new 1080p sets are becoming common (Sony claims its PS3 will support 1080p). Unless your viewing environment is configured right—and you enjoy sitting close to the set—you can't tell much difference between 1080p and 720p.

■ **Many inexpensive plasmas are actually only "Extended Definition," meaning that they convert all digital signals to 480p, a nice picture but not nearly as sharp as HDTV.**

2 Go with a television that comes in a widescreen, or 16:9, ratio—really the only way to play since all HDTV programming and high-def games support widescreen format.

3 Make sure your new set has lots of inputs, or you'll end up investing in an expensive switch box. The more HDMI/DVI and component inputs, the better (decent models have a combination of at least five).



4 Beware of lag. Most new HDTVs have a native resolution (often 720p), and all incoming signals are scaled up or down to match it by the TV's video processor. A slow processor can cause a delay between when you push a button and the resulting onscreen action. While the Xbox 360 and PS3 (and some Xbox 1 games) can output a 720p picture, and therefore make it unnecessary for 720p televisions to convert the signal, older systems output in standard television format at 480i or enhanced 480p. Your best defense against lag is to test for it: Drag your oldest game system to the store and try it out on different HDTV models using regular composite cables.

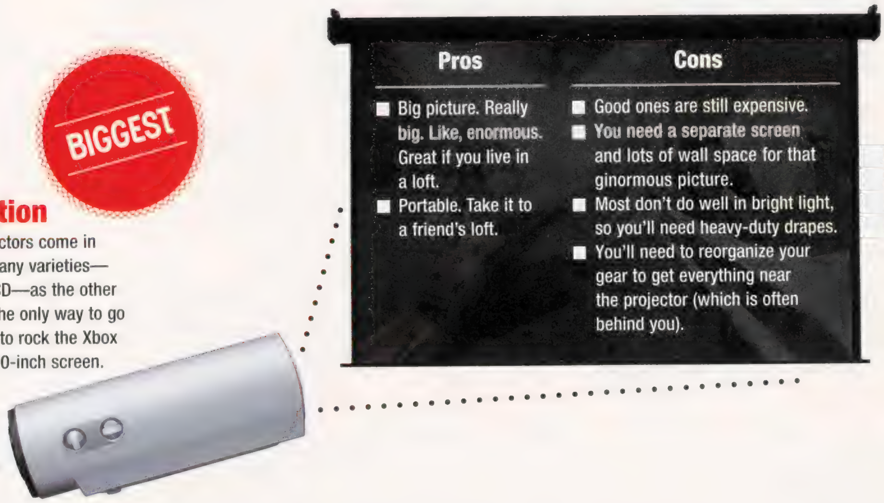
5 Look carefully for each set's particular quirks. Does the pixel separation in certain LCD sets make it seem like you're watching the action through a screen door? Are you one of the few unfortunate souls who sees the rainbow blur on DLP sets? Watch, play, and choose carefully. This isn't a purchase you'll want to repeat anytime soon.

>> JOHN MADDEN GETS SERVED...WITH A LAWSUIT. PERNELL HARRIS SAYS THAT EA USED HIS IDEAS IN *MADDEN NFL 06*'S SUPERSTAR MODE.

BIGGEST

Front Projection

These projectors come in nearly as many varieties—CRT, DLP, LCD—as the other set types. The only way to go if you want to rock the Xbox 360 on a 100-inch screen.



Pros

- Big picture. Really big. Like, enormous. Great if you live in a loft.
- Portable. Take it to a friend's loft.

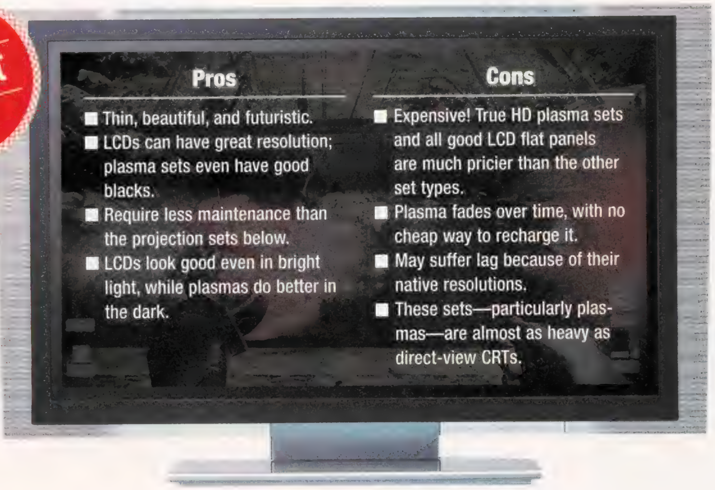
Cons

- Good ones are still expensive.
- You need a separate screen and lots of wall space for that ginormous picture.
- Most don't do well in bright light, so you'll need heavy-duty drapes.
- You'll need to reorganize your gear to get everything near the projector (which is often behind you).

SEXIEST

LCD/Plasma Flat-panel Sets

This is what most people picture when they think HDTV: sets sleek and thin enough to hang on the wall. LCDs top out at just about 50 inches, but plasma sets get much bigger, although you'll certainly pay for it.



Pros

- Thin, beautiful, and futuristic.
- LCDs can have great resolution; plasma sets even have good blacks.
- Require less maintenance than the projection sets below.
- LCDs look good even in bright light, while plasmas do better in the dark.

Cons

- Expensive! True HD plasma sets and all good LCD flat panels are much pricier than the other set types.
- Plasma fades over time, with no cheap way to recharge it.
- May suffer lag because of their native resolutions.
- These sets—particularly plasmas—are almost as heavy as direct-view CRTs.

BEST VALUE

LCD/DLP/LCOS Rear-projection Sets

Not as thin as the flat panels, but much thinner and lighter than their CRT counterparts, these HDTVs are available in sizes ranging from 40 inches to more than 60 inches. They offer the best value for your money, with plenty of great features and good picture quality to boot.

Pros

- Inexpensive. You can get a lot of TV for a reasonable price.
- LCDs from Sony and the LCOS sets from JVC feature a "game" mode.
- Most new 1080p sets fit into this category.
- They're lighter than they look.

Cons

- These displays don't project a true black, although they are getting better.
- Native resolutions could mean gaming lag, depending on the set.
- LCDs can show a screen-door effect; DLPs can show color blur.
- Projectors mean bulbs. Plan to spend $300 every 3,000 hours, or spring for the extended warranty when you buy the TV.

BOOBUS TOOBUS: AN HDTV GLOSSARY

Interlaced: A signal that draws every other line on the screen in two passes. Not as clear as progressive scan. Resolution formats include 480i—called standard resolution—and 1080i.

Progressive: Draws every line every pass. Clearer than interlaced. Formats include 480p, 720p, and 1080p.

Composite: The lowest resolution video connection. Cannot use for HD.

S-Video: Better than composite, but not good enough for HD.

Component: Here we go! The standard HD cable.

HDMI/DVI: The best HD connection. All digital, these two are compatible with each other, although HDMI passes the audio signal as well as video.

CRT: Cathode-ray tube. Old-style sets, with vacuum tubes and everything.

LCD: Liquid crystal display. Like the monitor on your laptop, available as a flat-panel or projection set.

DLP: Digital light projection. Millions of micromirrors reflect the picture onto a screen. Available in either front or rear projection.

LCOS: Liquid crystal on silicone (also called HD-ILA or SXRD depending on the company). Liquid crystals that project the image onto the screen, similar to DLP.

Plasma: Gas-filled pixels that glow red, green, or blue depending on the electrical charge pumped through them.

Aspect ratio: The size of the screen, given in inches wide by inches high. See the definitions below.

4:3: Also called full screen. This is something of a misnomer, since widescreen (below) generally shows more picture. This is the shape of older, almost square televisions.

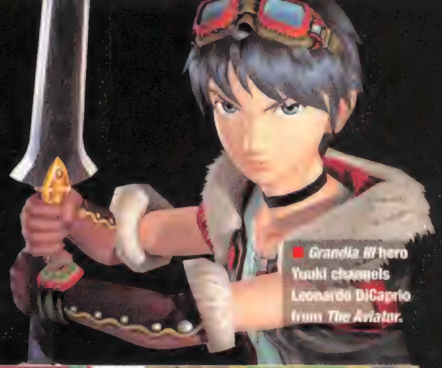
16:9: Also called widescreen. The official format of HDTV, it comes closer to the screen ratio we see in movie theaters. You will almost always get more of the picture with this format.

Color blur: DLP sets use a spinning color wheel to produce the picture, and some people see a psychedelic color streak behind moving images.

ACCORDING TO HARRIS, IN 2003 HE PRESENTED THE COMPANY WITH A FOOTBALL CONCEPT THAT HAD MANY OF THE SAME FEATURES.... >>

COMING SOON

Forget the flowers—get your true love a game


Grandia III hero Yuuki channels Leonardo DiCaprio from *The Aviator.*

FEBRUARY 2006

24: The Game

2K Games • PS2 — As CTU agent Jack Bauer, you defend freedom in real time while stoically avoiding bathroom breaks.

Bounty Hounds

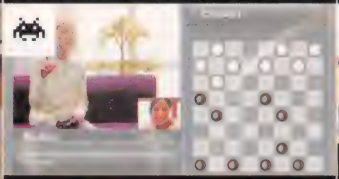
Namco • PSP — Guns, aliens, guns, and more guns. These are outer space bounty hunters that will obviously shoot first.

Chibi Robo

Nintendo • GC — This oddball title casts you as a tiny robot tasked with pleasing his host family. Next stop: Roomba RPG.

Commandos: Strike Force

Eidos • PS2/XB — If you're pining for a gritty WWII first-person shooter set in the European theater...you somehow missed the five released last year. *Commandos* offers a sliver of originality, at least: three unique playable characters and nonlinear missions.



EyeToy: Chat

Sony CEA • PS2 — Let's be real. They should just call this *EyeToy: Get Naked on Your PS2 and Play Checkers With Hotties.*

Exit

Ubisoft • PSP — This art-deco action title updates the addictive side-scrolling arcade classic *Elevator Action.*

Generation of Chaos

Nippon Ichi • PSP — Massive 30-on-30 skirmishes make this the most er...chaotic tactical RPG on PSP to date.

Sonic Riders

Sega • PS2/XB/GC — Take your Ritalin. *Sonic* is extremely speedy in this grand prix airboard-racing game.

Damage Ratio
Gilled Pawn
6 Hit
110
124
119
Yuki
Alfina
Miranda
Alonso

Grandia III

Square Enix • PS2 — This offbeat role-playing epic serves up lush vistas, a colorful cast of characters, and the ability to pilot aircraft. "I believe players can feel wind, fly in the big sky, and explore the vast world fully," muses *Grandia III* Producer Katsunori Saito.

Princess Peach gets some action.

Also in February

Drill Dozer
Nintendo • GBA

Field Commander
Sony Online • PSP

Full Spectrum Warrior: Ten Hammers
THQ • PS2/XB

Super Princess Peach
Nintendo • DS

Teen Titans
Majesco • PS2/XB/GC/GBA

ToCA Race Driver 3
Codemasters • PS2/XB

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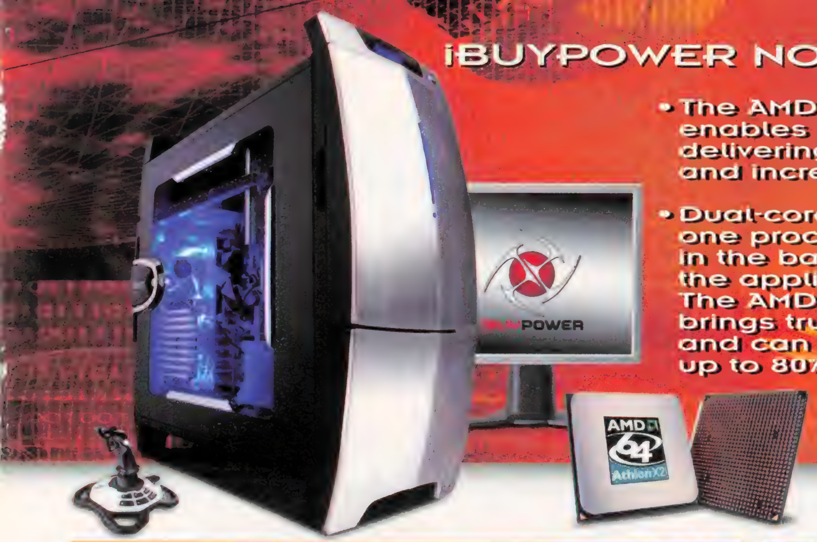

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XBOX 360: THE NEXT WAVE

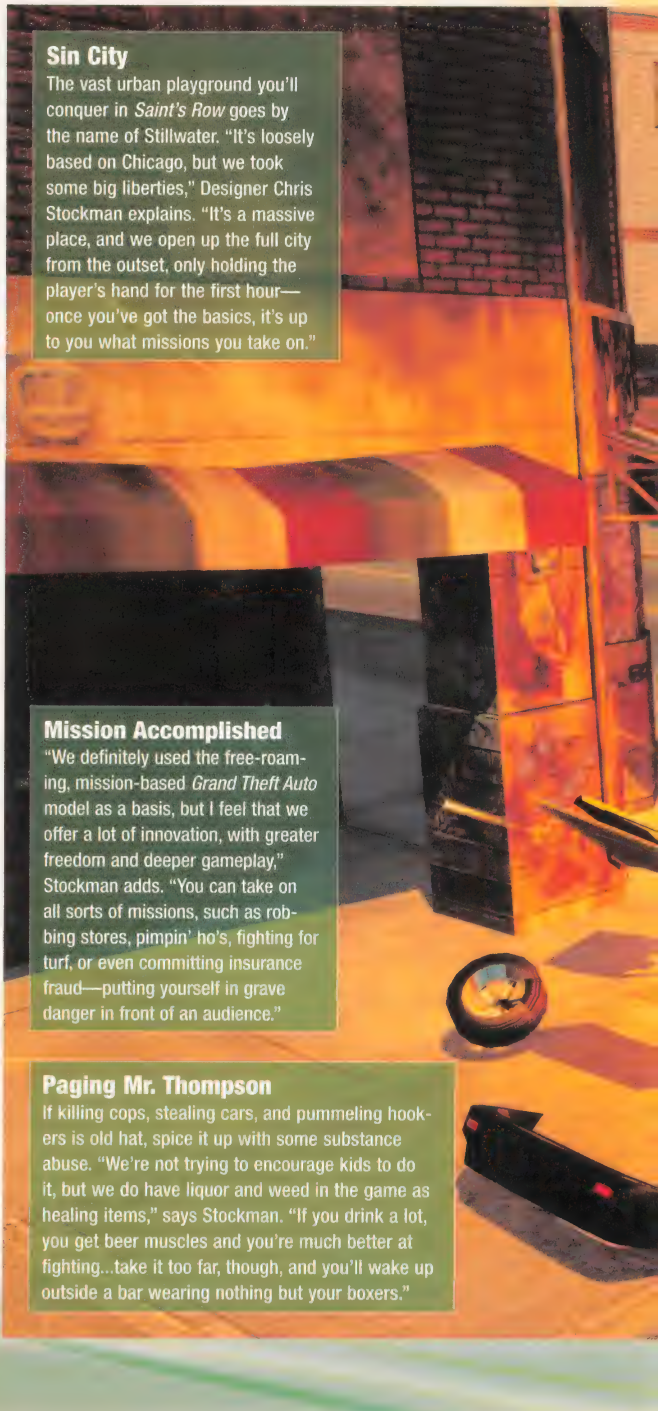
Combat your postlaunch blues with a second dose of 360 action

So you've already played the hell out of the Xbox 360 launch lineup. What's next? Well, as with most new consoles, you'll see a lot of warmed-over shoulda-been launch titles and some quickie current-gen ports, but at least the pickings aren't slim. Here's a brief, no-nonsense look at the games that will grace your new system in the coming months...

SAINT'S ROW

The 360's answer to GTA?

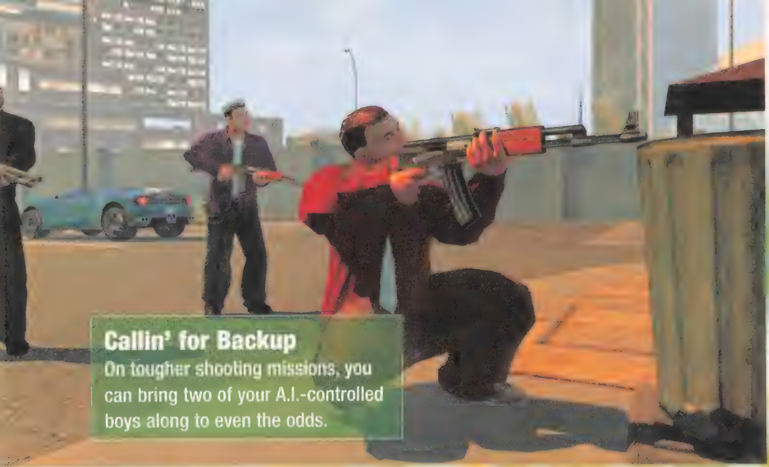
Publisher: THQ • Release Date: March 2006



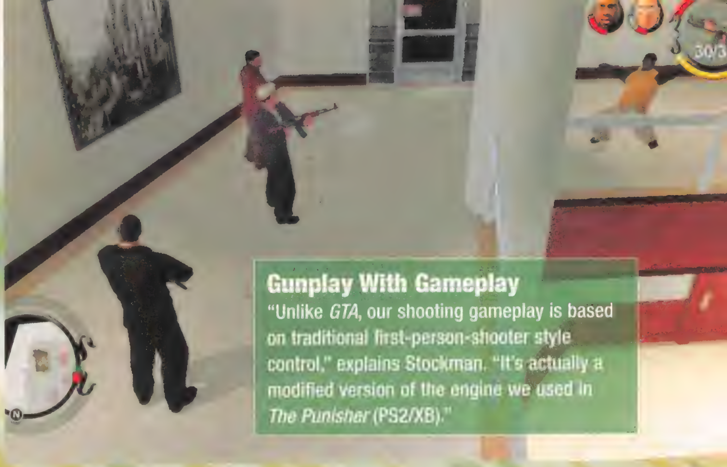
Sin City
The vast urban playground you'll conquer in *Saint's Row* goes by the name of Stillwater. "It's loosely based on Chicago, but we took some big liberties," Designer Chris Stockman explains. "It's a massive place, and we open up the full city from the outset, only holding the player's hand for the first hour—once you've got the basics, it's up to you what missions you take on."

Mission Accomplished
"We definitely used the free-roaming, mission-based *Grand Theft Auto* model as a basis, but I feel that we offer a lot of innovation, with greater freedom and deeper gameplay," Stockman adds. "You can take on all sorts of missions, such as robbing stores, pimpin' ho's, fighting for turf, or even committing insurance fraud—putting yourself in grave danger in front of an audience."

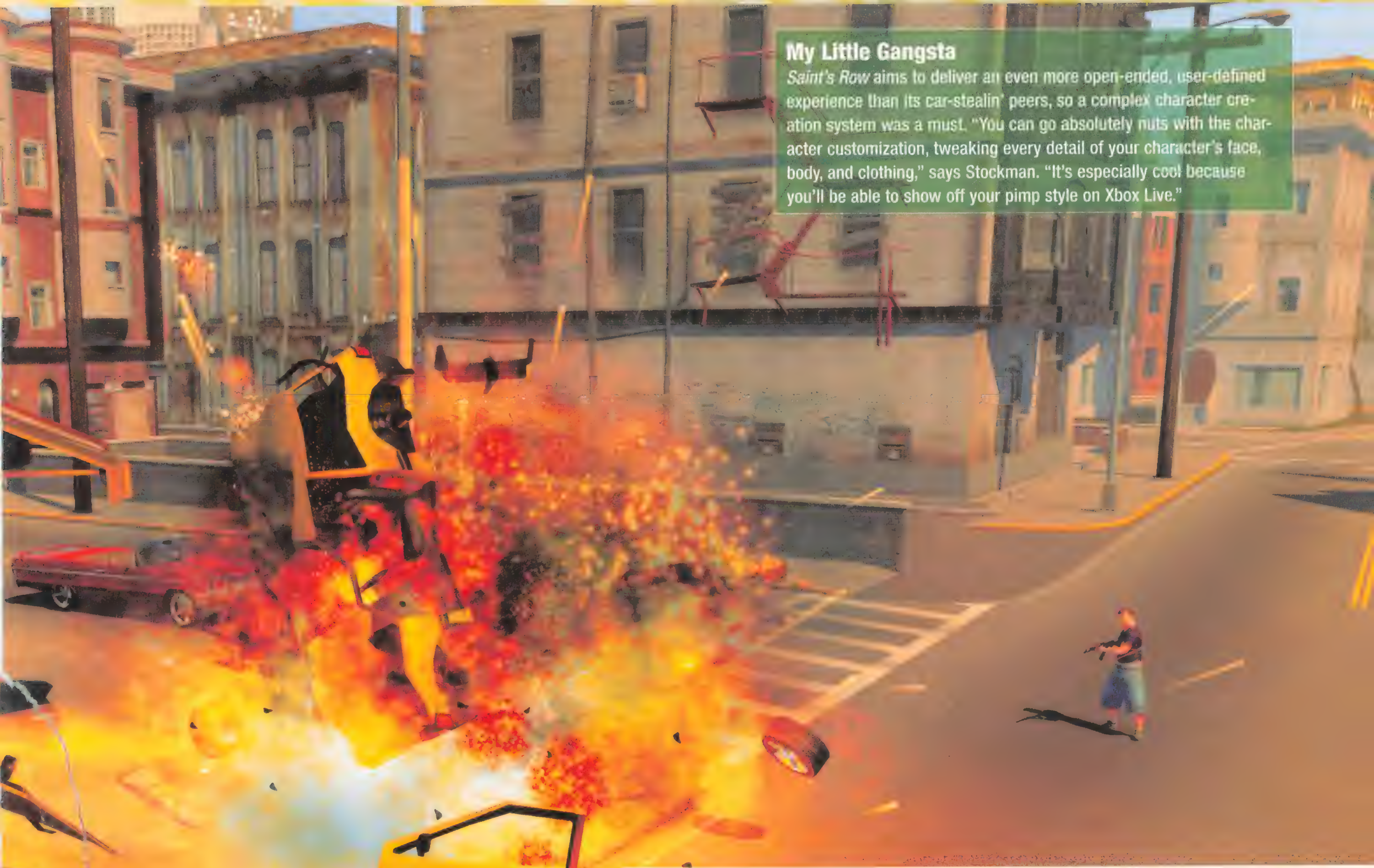
Paging Mr. Thompson
If killing cops, stealing cars, and pummeling hookers is old hat, spice it up with some substance abuse. "We're not trying to encourage kids to do it, but we do have liquor and weed in the game as healing items," says Stockman. "If you drink a lot, you get beer muscles and you're much better at fighting...take it too far, though, and you'll wake up outside a bar wearing nothing but your boxers."



Callin' for Backup
On tougher shooting missions, you can bring two of your A.I.-controlled boys along to even the odds.



Gunplay With Gameplay
"Unlike *GTA*, our shooting gameplay is based on traditional first-person-shooter style control," explains Stockman. "It's actually a modified version of the engine we used in *The Punisher* (PS2/XB)."



My Little Gangsta
Saint's Row aims to deliver an even more open-ended, user-defined experience than its car-stealin' peers, so a complex character creation system was a must. "You can go absolutely nuts with the character customization, tweaking every detail of your character's face, body, and clothing," says Stockman. "It's especially cool because you'll be able to show off your pimp style on Xbox Live."

Live Crime
Saint's Row will also offer various online multiplayer contests (modified versions of classic first-person shooting fare such as capture the flag) that unfold in small chunks of the city. ➤

FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

EA's boxing sim delivers a stunning visual knockout

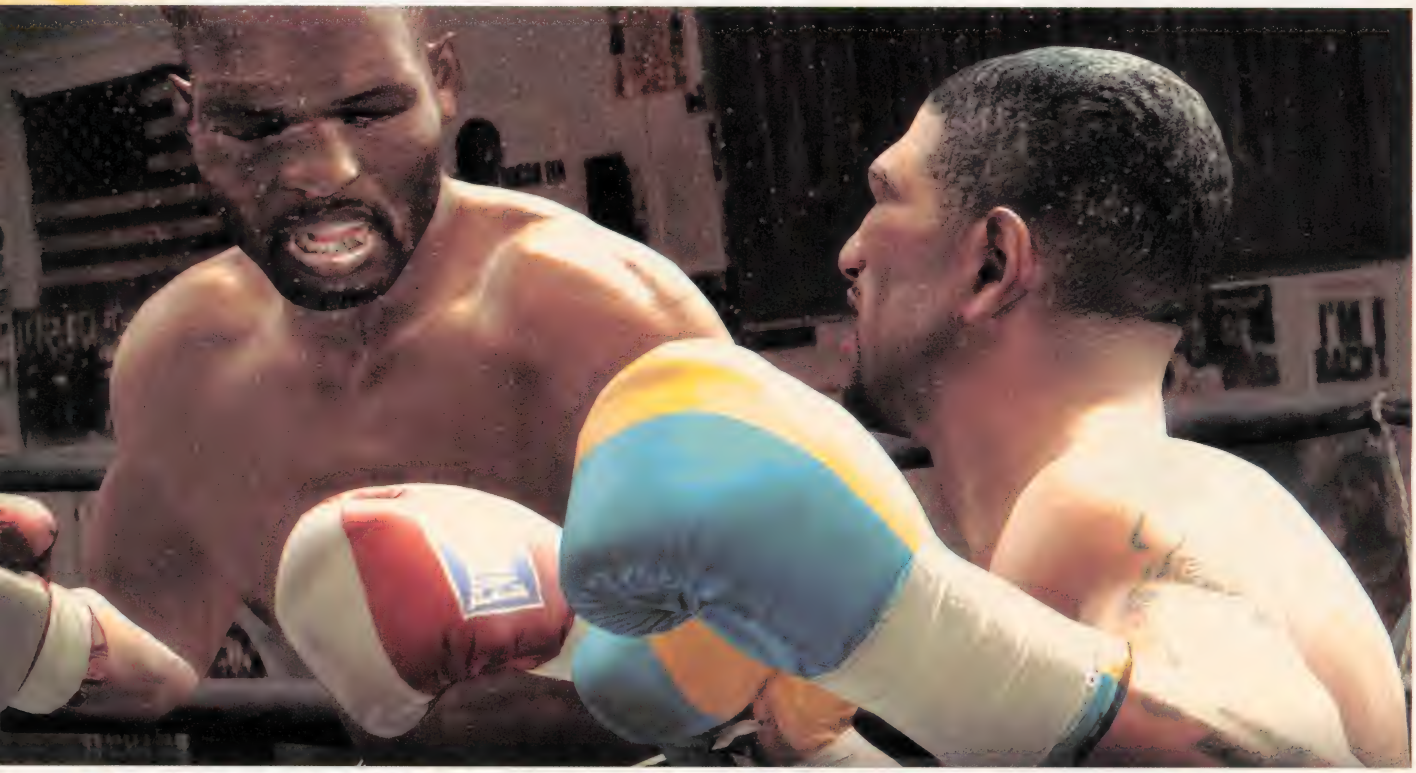
Publisher: EA Sports • Release Date: February 2006

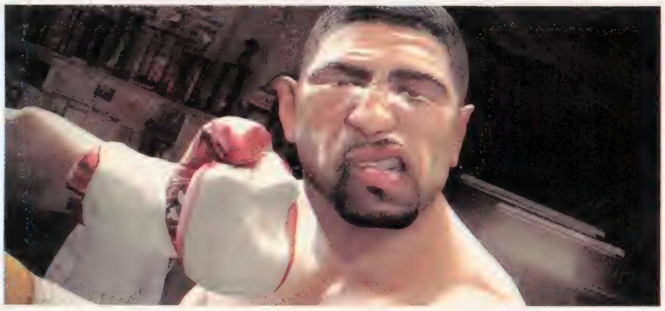
Believe It

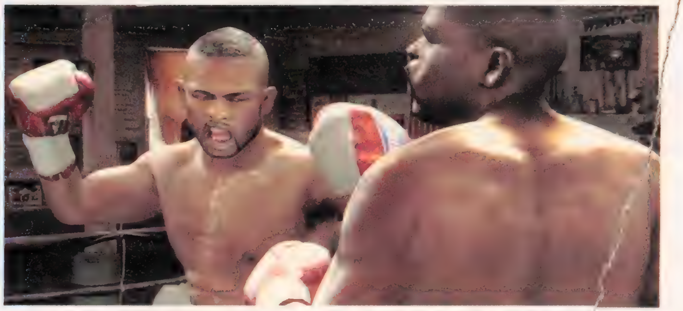
We've played *Round 3* and, yes, it actually looks like these screenshots. "We're trying to build a more emotionally immersive experience through the characters' facial expressions," says Producer Kudo Tsunoda. The lifelike visages actually affect gameplay: Pay attention and you'll see if your foe is tired, dazed, or about to obliterate you. In fact, the game won't even have an onscreen health meter...

Quite the Impact

"The great thing about boxing is the concept that one punch can change a fight," says Tsunoda. "You can be getting your ass kicked for 10 rounds and boom—you land one big punch, drop the guy, and you're right back into the fight." *Round 3* introduces a new way to turn the tide—impact punches, special hits that pulverize your opponent from a dynamic first-person cutaway view







Sounds Like a Fight

"With our ESPN deal, we were able to go to their *Friday Night Fight* [venues] and record the crowd and put actual live crowd data into the game," says Tsunoda. "You'll get to hear those individual voices, making you feel like you're in the arena."

A Worthy Adversary

Ali-Frazier, Duran-Leonard, Tyson-Holyfield's ear—boxing has always had some heated rivalries. *Round 3*'s career mode plays up the feuds, with plenty of opportunities for trash-talking at bombastic press conferences and weigh-ins.

Stylin' and Profilin'

"We're giving the user the ability to customize their own style," says Tsunoda. So aside from modifying your fighter's physical appearance, you'll be tweaking his punching/blocking mechanics and how he moves around the ring.

Already in Progress
The online *Final Fantasy XI* community is already home to over 1.5 million characters, and the Xbox 360 release will be fully compatible with the PlayStation 2 and PC versions. Cross-console romance... now a reality.

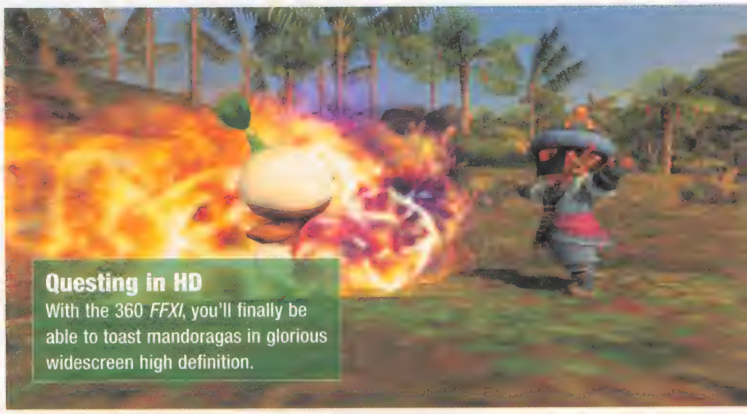
Voices Carry
Despite the nearly universal support for the Xbox Live headset, Square Enix previously stated that *FFXI* would not support voice chat...yet, oddly, the current beta test does allow it. Dare we dream?

FINAL FANTASY XI

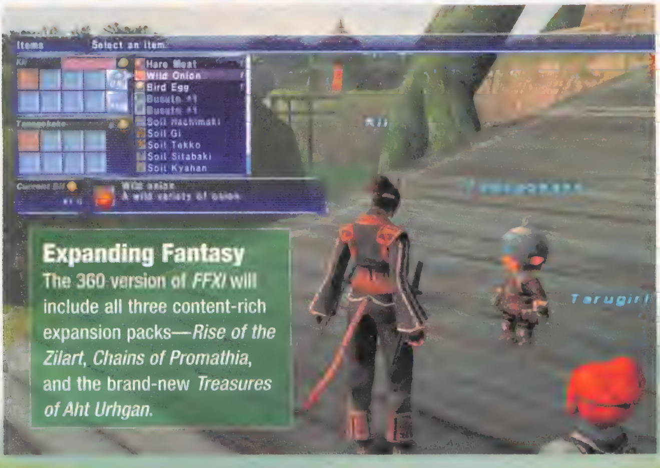
A massive role-playing coup for the 360

Publisher: Square Enix • Release Date: Spring 2006

Aural Upgrade
While this *FFXI* offers no exclusive content, audiophiles will dig the new Dolby Digital 5.1 sound mix.

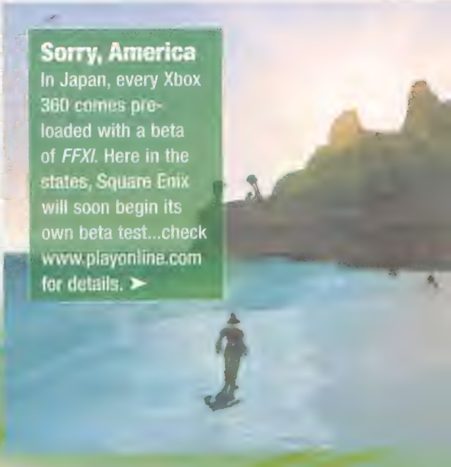


Questing in HD
With the 360 *FFXI*, you'll finally be able to toast mandoragas in glorious widescreen high definition.


Items
Select an item.
Hare Meat
Wild Onion
Bird Egg
Soil Hachimaki
Soil Gi
Soil Tekko
Soil Sitabaki
Soil Kyahan
Wild onion
A wild variety of onion.
Tarugirl

Expanding Fantasy
The 360 version of *FFXI* will include all three content-rich expansion packs—*Rise of the Zilart*, *Chains of Promathia*, and the brand-new *Treasures of Aht Urhgan*.

Working Blue
Treasures of Aht Urhgan debuts the blue mage class, wizards who master enemies' spells.

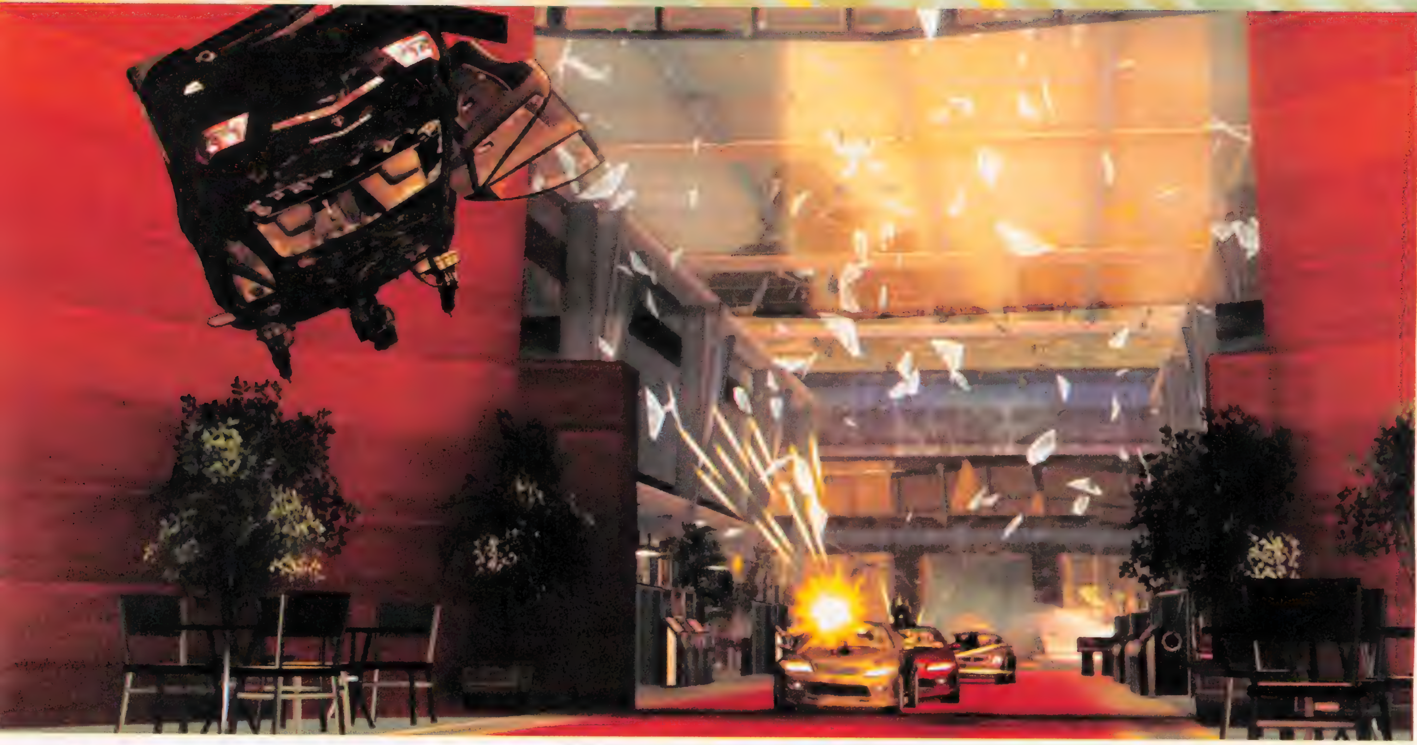


Sorry, America
In Japan, every Xbox 360 comes preloaded with a beta of *FFXI*. Here in the states, Square Enix will soon begin its own beta test...check www.playonline.com for details. ➤

FULL AUTO

Hot rides meet hot lead

Publisher: Sega • Release Date: February 2006



Controlled Chaos

You are racing in *Full Auto*, but it's easy to lose sight of that simple goal when you're busy firing missiles, laying mines, destroying roadside attractions, boosting over mad jumps, and using the unique "unwreck" feature to rewind time and avoid wipeouts. "We've actually had to rein some of the chaos and destruction back," Producer Cord Smith adds. "It was just too intense and distracting."

Go Your Own Way

Why stay on the road when you can careen through a glitzy casino? *Full Auto* rewards curiosity with myriad shortcuts, many of them through fully furnished buildings. Don't be shy—if a fence, wall, or ramp looks as if it might lead somewhere, give it a shot. You can always unwreck if your potential secret passageway ends up slamming your ride into a brick wall.

A Delicate Balance

We were surprised to find that *Full Auto's* gameplay has evolved since our last test drive. "We've rebalanced all the weapons and made the control feel more like driving a real car," says Smith.

A Dish Best Served Cold

Full Auto skipped the racer-packed 360 launch, but now must face rival *Burnout Revenge*. "Our game is different," explains Smith. "It's perfect for people who like to race hard and blow s*** up."

Live Carnage

Expect great things from *Full Auto's* ultraviolent Xbox Live play—official tournaments, downloadable content...the whole works. Well, except for arena combat—look for that in the PS3 version. ➤

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"A Fresh Experience For Mobile"
"Hugely Recommended"
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IGN.COM EDITORS' CHOICE AWARD
"You Must Experience This Game"
WG WORLD RATING 5/5
DOOM RPG
OK
CLR
END
SEND
Menu
Map

JAMDAT MOBILE

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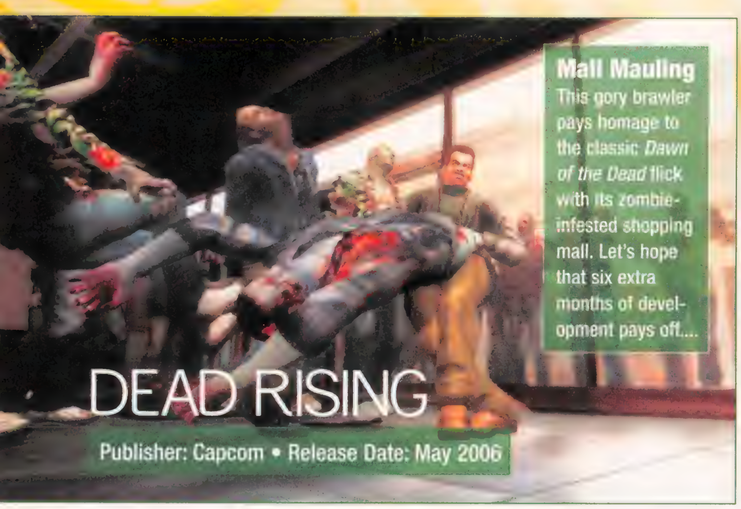
XBOX 360: LATE LAUNCH

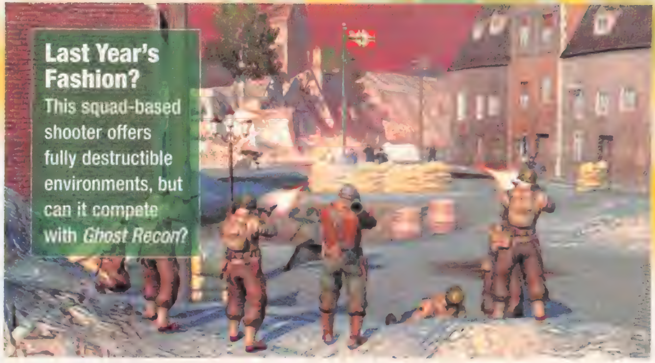
The best-laid plans don't always pan out—in a perfect world, you would have had these titles back in November...



Mall Mauling
This gory brawler pays homage to the classic *Dawn of the Dead* flick with its zombie-infested shopping mall. Let's hope that six extra months of development pays off....

DEAD RISING

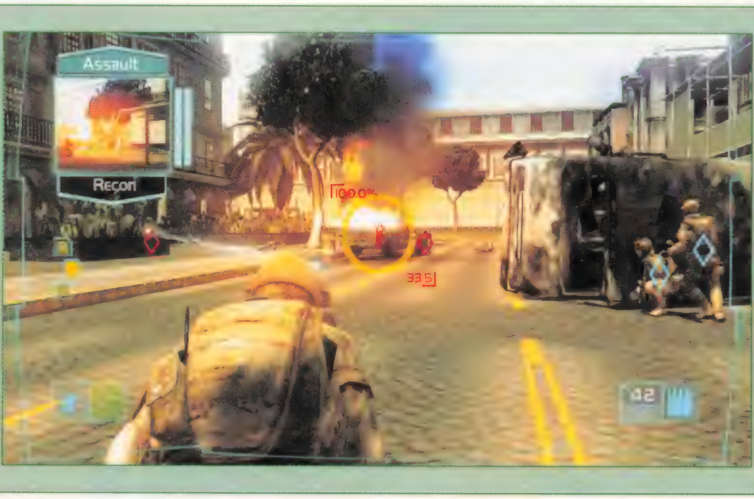
Publisher: Capcom • Release Date: May 2006



Last Year's Fashion?
This squad-based shooter offers fully destructible environments, but can it compete with *Ghost Recon*?

THE OUTFIT

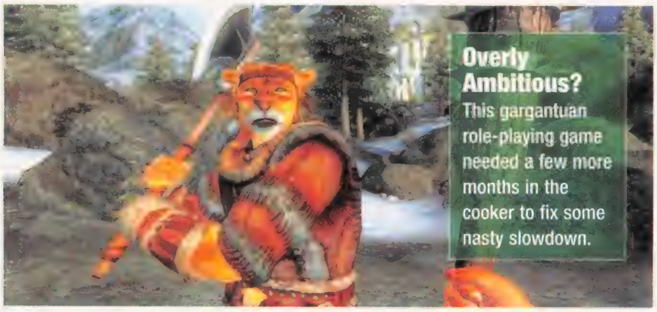
Publisher: THQ • Release Date: Spring 2006



GHOST RECON: ADVANCED WARFIGHTER

Publisher: Ubisoft • Release Date: February 2006

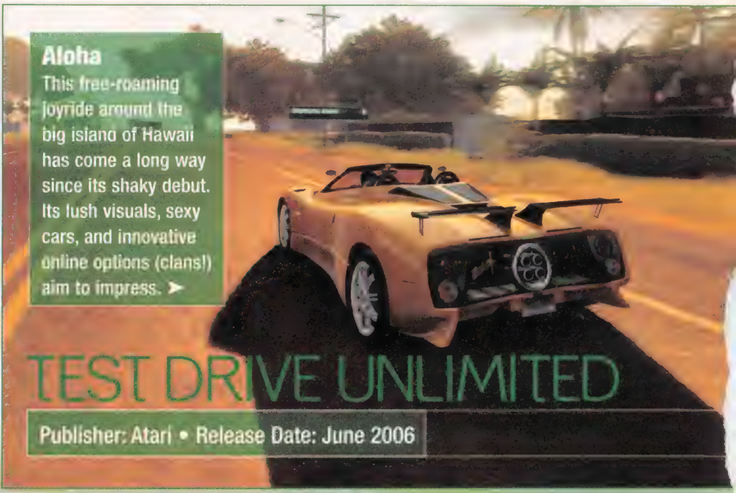
The Home Stretch
This latest chapter in the esteemed squad-based military shooting series focuses on gritty urban warfare in the slums of Mexico City. Impressive visuals, some truly innovative tech (futuristic mapping and communication tools), and solid 16-player Xbox Live matches will make this the game to beat this spring.



Overly Ambitious?
This gargantuan role-playing game needed a few more months in the cooker to fix some nasty slowdown.

THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

Publisher: Bethesda • Release Date: March 2006



Aloha
This free-roaming joyride around the big island of Hawaii has come a long way since its shaky debut. Its lush visuals, sexy cars, and innovative online options (clans!) aim to impress. ➤

TEST DRIVE UNLIMITED

Publisher: Atari • Release Date: June 2006

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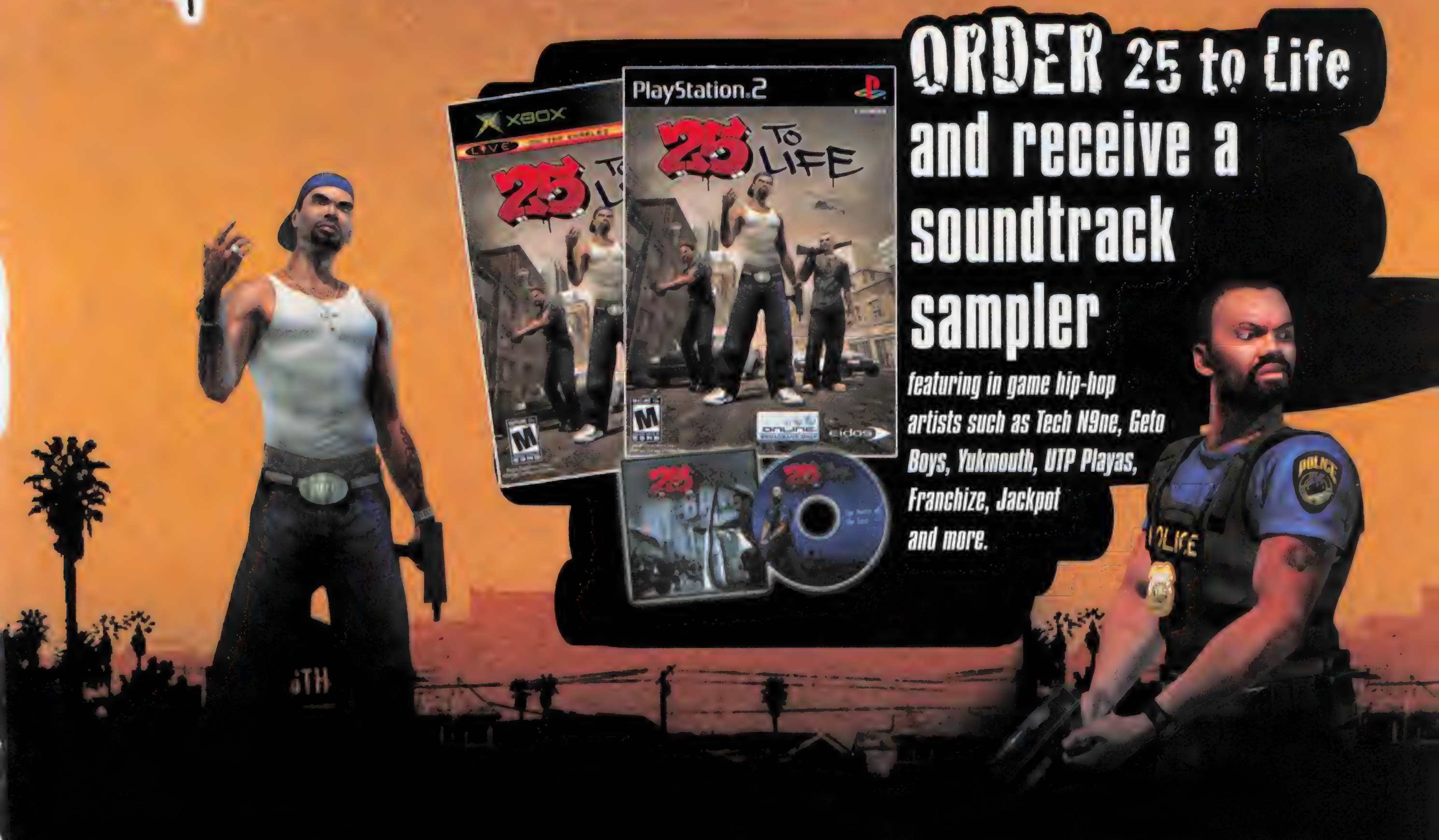
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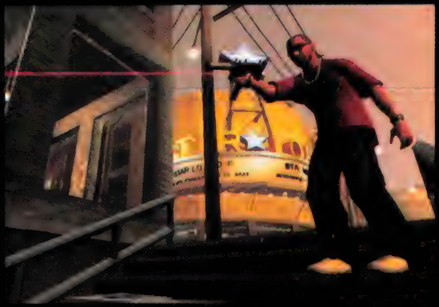

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XBOX 360: PORT CITY

Since it's easier to spruce up a current-gen game than to make an original 360 outing, here come the generational crossovers

BURNOUT REVENGE

Publisher: EA Games • Release Date: March 2006

The Sickest Crash Yet

Burnout developer Criterion is doing more than simply polishing up the visuals for this next-gen port: *Revenge* will sport a number of new Xbox Live features on the 360. You'll now be able to upload and download your replays, rack up impressive Live achievements, and follow the careers of your rivals with the Live Revenge system that tracks their progress.

BLAZING ANGELS

Publisher: Ubisoft • Release Date: March 2006

Dual Dogfight

You'll find the same blend of WWII aerial action on the 360 and original Xbox but expect the next-gen version to offer slicker visuals, improved audio, and Xbox Live achievements.

First on 360?

The 360 port of this trippy shooter (you can slow, stop, and reverse the flow of time) will hit before its Xbox 1 cousin.

TIMESHIFT

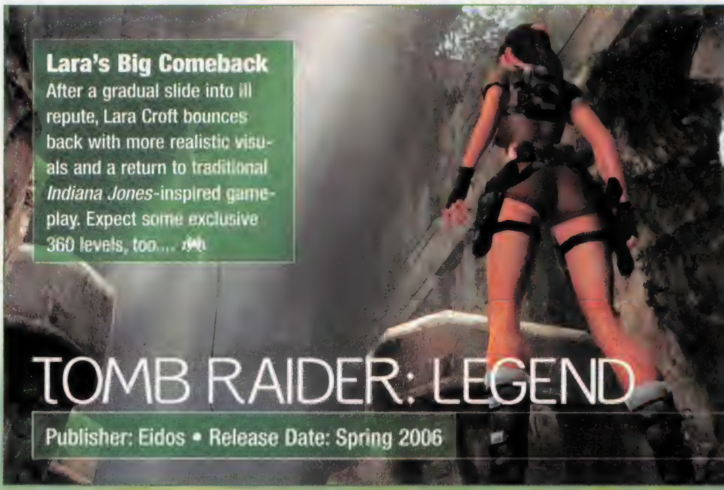
Publisher: Atari • Release Date: Spring 2006

War Marches On

EA's grand multiplayer war sim gets little more than a minor face-lift for its jump to Xbox 360.

BATTLEFIELD 2: MODERN COMBAT

Publisher: EA Games • Release Date: February 2006



Lara's Big Comeback

After a gradual slide into ill repute, Lara Croft bounces back with more realistic visuals and a return to traditional *Indiana Jones*-inspired gameplay. Expect some exclusive 360 levels, too....

TOMB RAIDER: LEGEND

Publisher: Eidos • Release Date: Spring 2006

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THE GREATEST

20

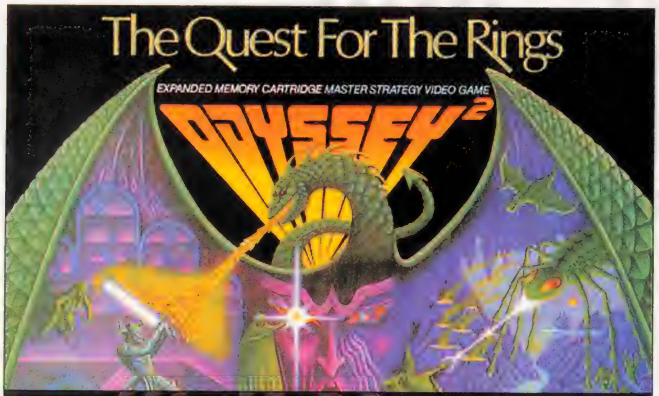
0 VIDEOGAMES OF THEIR TIME

The top 200 games? Surely that many games don't even exist. But what do I know—I'm just the intern, and I suppose *EGM* must have reviewed at least 200 titles over its 16-year history. (Actually, we've reviewed 4,562, for everything from the Atari 7800 to the Xbox 360. *—Ed.*) For our big bicentennial issue, the staff decided to rank the top 200 in ascending order of greatness. But top-games lists are so cliché, and one thing I know about my boss is that he won't touch a cliché with a 10-foot pole. (That's a cliché. *—Ed.*) So to spice up this monster list of gaming goodness (One more cliché like that and you're fired. *—Ed.*), we're altering the criteria and rounding up the greatest arcade and console games of *their* time rather than *all* time.

What's the difference? Simple. We're ranking these games based on how much they consumed our lives—and, to a lesser extent, rattled the videogame biz—when they first hit arcades or consoles. That's why something as primitive as *Pac-Man* ranks higher than the more-fun-to-play-today *Halo 2*. *Pac-Man*'s amazingly addictive mazes and quirky characters—and let's not forget its breakfast cereal or top-40 tune—enthralled us in ways few games have managed to since. We're also taking our list personally, filling it with anecdotes from game designers who created or were inspired by these hits, along with our own warm-and-fuzzy memories.

Speaking of taking it personally, we're sure you're going to have a lot to say about the list, overloading our inbox with gripes and omissions and death threats, oh my! (That's your third strike. Clean out your desk. *—Ed.*) Fine, but who'll you get to sort through readers' outraged claims of dissed games and "corrected" ranking orders next month? (Good point...welcome back. *—Ed.*) Ahem. Send your levelheaded and entirely reasonable arguments to EGM@ziffdavis.com, with the subject "Top 200 of Their Time."

—Steve Semrad, EGM *intern* ►


The Quest For The Rings
EXPANDED MEMORY CARTRIDGE MASTER STRATEGY VIDEO GAME
ODYSSEY²

200 The Quest for the Rings

Odyssey 2 • 1981 — Maybe you've never heard of this insanely ambitious adventure, but if you ever enjoyed a *Gauntlet, Secret of Mana*, or *Baldur's Gate* game, you owe it a debt of gratitude. Two players choose from four classes to fight monsters (sound familiar yet?) and recover powerful rings. Complete with tokens and a map, it was an early crucial step in bringing pen-and-paper RPGs to the TV.

199 Super Castlevania IV
Super NES • 1991

198 Utopia
Intellivision • 1981

Long before fatalities, prostitute beatings, and Jack Thompson sullied videogames' good name, you could find do-good strategic fare like *Utopia*, where building schools and hospitals is part of the game.

197 NFL 2K1
Dreamcast • 2000

196 Guitar Hero
PS2 • 2005

Toting this game's Fisher-Price–style guitar peripheral around on your back won't get you laid—nor, in fact, will contorting yourself Clapton style through the game's 35 incredible tunes in front of the opposite sex. But play it solo or with a like-minded crüe and *Guitar Hero* will fulfill all your rock 'n' roll fantasies.

195 The Chronicles of Riddick
Xbox • 2004

194 Nam-1975
Neo•Geo • 1990

193 SSX
PS2 • 2000

192 Shadow of the Colossus
PS2 • 2005

191 Devil's Crush
Turbografx-16 • 1990

190 Bushido Blade
PlayStation • 1997

Say what you want about its blocky graphics, but in many ways this open-arena, hyperrealistic (one-hit kills!) fighting game still hasn't been topped.

189 Metal Gear
NES • 1988

188 Chu-Chu Rocket!
Dreamcast • 2000

187 Mario Party
N64 • 1999

Elegantly transformed gaming into a social event and "normal people" into button-mashing fanatics.

186 1080° Snowboarding
N64 • 1998

185 Dragon's Lair
Arcade • 1983

Now that game graphics look better than Lego blocks shooting at other Lego blocks, it's easy to scoff at the simple memorization gameplay of this "interactive" cartoon and all the laser-disc-powered coin-ops that followed it. But at the time—admit it!—you were amazed.

184 Blaster Master
NES • 1988

183 Gorf
Arcade • 1981

182 Psychonauts
Xbox • 2005

181 River City Ransom
NES • 1990

180 Super Off Road
Arcade • 1989

Nobody really knew or cared who Ivan "Ironman" Stewart was, but damn if his game wasn't awesome. *Super Off Road*'s complex, tortuous tracks, vehicle upgrades, and arcade-cheap A.I. made it a classic. And when you won, you stood on a podium while the national anthem played and a chick in a bikini pinched your ass. Keep that thumb up, Ironman.

179 Magician Lord
Neo•Geo • 1990

178 Dance Dance Revolution
Arcade • 1998

177 BurgerTime
Arcade • 1982

176 Flashback
Genesis • 1993

175 Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee

PlayStation • 1997 — "It was an era where everyone was trying to do 3D, but I felt that instead of pushing 3D, we should push story and unique game mechanics inside of a somewhat retro style of puzzle/platformer—and try to make it funny. We wanted the experience to make people feel a part of this strange world. They should be drawn toward distant locations simply due to the beauty and mystery of the landscape and architectural elements."
—Oddworld *director Lorne Lanning*

174 Snatcher
Sega CD • 1994

173 The Legend of Zelda: Link's Awakening
Game Boy • 1994

172 Katamari Damacy
PS2 • 2004

171 Beyond Good & Evil
Multiplatform • 2003

170 Perfect Dark
N64 • 2000

169 Crazy Taxi
Arcade • 1999

168 Sega Rally Championship
Arcade • 1995

167 Medal of Honor
PlayStation • 1999

"By far the best-sounding game on the PS1, and this amazing attention to detail lifted the game to a new level. My mind started to really fill in the gaps—I actually felt like I was there. I would stand breathless by a wall, terrified of the approaching Germans I could hear."
—Alex Ward, creative director at Criterion (Burnout)

166 Prince Of Persia: The Sands of Time
Multiplatform • 2003

165 Double Dribble
NES • 1987

164 Bionic Commando
NES • 1988

163 Military Madness
TurboGrafx-16 • 1989

162 Burnout 3: Takedown
Multiplatform • 2004

161 Devil May Cry
PS2 • 2001

"It's [now] well known, but this game started out as 'a new *Resident Evil* for a next-generation console.' *DMC* was my challenge to those who played light, casual games. I believed there were [more] people out there that had a true love of games—fortunately [when *DMC* was released it sold very well]. I was relieved that the game market was still strong and thriving." *—Hideki Kamiya, director of* Devil May Cry

160 NiGHTS into Dreams
Saturn • 1996

159 Ecco the Dolphin
Genesis • 1992

158 Herzog Zwei
Genesis • 1989

157 The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker
GameCube • 2003

156 Legendary Axe
TurboGrafx-16 • 1989

155 The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask

Nintendo 64 • 2000 — "The repeating three days became an unprecedented, unique game system, but [it caused a lot of headaches in development]. Because it was so different, I was concerned that only a relatively small audience might love it. But I'm very glad to know that recently an unexpectedly large number of game fans are calling it the best of *Zelda*."
—Eiji Aonuma, director of Majora's Mask

154 Moon Patrol
Arcade • 1982

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153 Ys Book I & II
TurboGrafx-16 CD • 1990

152 Cybernator
Super NES • 1993

151 Front Line
Arcade • 1982

150 Kirby's Adventure
NES • 1993

149 Ghosts 'N Goblins
Arcade • 1985

148 PaRappa the Rapper
PlayStation • 1997

147 Spider-Man
Atari 2600 • 1982

146 Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell
Xbox • 2002 — "It may seem a bit strange, but the first word that comes to mind when I'm asked about the original *Splinter Cell* is 'fear.' Positive fear! Developing an original game is always a great challenge—it could be a success, or it could lead to pure failure. For *SC*, we were so afraid of failure that we never stopped raising the bar at every phase of development. This is why the game ended up with such impressive graphics, gameplay, and innovative features. Even when the game was released, we were still afraid—afraid of finding bugs!" *—Mathieu Ferland, executive producer of* Splinter Cell

145 Road Rash
3DO • 1994

"This product was my personal 'jones' for a while, and I worked hard to get to the highest level of the game. The 3DO platform would have been more successful if *Road Rash* had shipped a year earlier."

—Former 3DO CEO Trip Hawkins

144 International Superstar Soccer
Super NES • 1995

143 Kaboom!
Atari 2600 • 1981

142 Tekken 3
PlayStation • 1997 "This game was my life in college. I ditched class for a week so I could take the arcade strategy guide and remap the button combos for the PS1." *—News Editor Bryan Intihar*

141 Paper Mario
N64 • 2001

140 Panzer Dragoon
Saturn • 1995

139 R.B.I. Baseball
NES • 1988

138 Wario Ware, Inc.: Mega Microgame$
GBA • 2003

137 Dig Dug
Arcade • 1982

136 Phantasy Star IV
Genesis • 1994

135 Ice Hockey
NES • 1988

134 Yar's Revenge
Atari 2600 • 1982

133 Final Fantasy X
PS2 • 2001

Gaming's premiere role-playing series took another great leap forward with this inaugural PS2 edition. Hollywood-quality voiceovers and lush 3D visuals kicked the series' already high production values into overdrive, while a complex skill system and strategic battle engine deepened the gameplay. And we won't even begin to pontificate on how important this game was to the cosplay community....

132 Virtua Tennis
Dreamcast • 2000

131 Sinistar
Arcade • 1982

"Be-ware, I live!"

130 Twisted Metal
PlayStation • 1995

129 Revenge of Shinobi
Genesis • 1989

128 Samurai Shodown II
Neo•Geo • 1994

Bong, bong, bong......beeeeeeeeeeeeeee deeeeeeeeee! Long long ago, there were a fighting game that try to make its quality ultimate. Because of its bloody life, it's no accident that it was involved with the troubles.

127 Zaxxon
Arcade • 1982

126 Animal Crossing
GameCube • 2002

125 Metal Gear Solid
Game Boy Color • 2000

Stealth action, convoluted story line, keycards, ridiculous boss names (and ridiculously awesome boss battles)—yep, it's a *Metal Gear* game all right. And a shockingly full-featured one, all crammed onto Nintendo's handheld.

124 Pole Position
Arcade • 1982

123 Battlezone
Arcade • 1980

122 Virtua Fighter 4
PS2 • 2002

It might lack the sizzle of *Tekken* and *Soul Calibur*, but nothing can match the depth of *VF4*. A refined combat engine, lifelike computer A.I., inventive new characters, and oodles of extras prove that the first 3D fighting series is still among the best.

121 Ico
PS2 • 2001

"The one game [of its generation] that I felt transported us to another place that had living characters we actually cared about. The artwork and castle design were stellar and seemed truly inspired—an obvious labor of love. [And] the hand-holding mechanic between the hero and the girl was nothing short of genius."

—Oddworld Inhabitants cofounder Lorne Lanning

120 OutRun
Arcade • 1986

119 Castlevania III: Dracula's Curse
NES • 1990

118 Pro Wrestling
NES • 1987

117 Indy 500
Atari 2600 • 1978

116 Shenmue
Dreamcast • 2000

115 Star Fox
Super NES • 1993

114 Card Fighters' Clash
Neo•Geo Pocket Color • 1999 — The best (perhaps only?) reason to buy a Neo•Geo Pocket Color. Today, one *EGM* writer (Seanbaby, if you must know) is still trying to collect every last card... seven years later.

113 Lunar: The Silver Star
Sega CD • 1993

112 God of War
PS2 • 2005

"A game with soul that transcends borders and cultures. Its story, sense of world, and graphics gave me a strong, exotic impression. [*Mario* creator Shigeru] Miyamoto and I had a laugh when we first played the game. We noticed a very Japanese-like 'service' to gamers, in particular the emphasis on details and sense. The *God of War* package includes an honest presentation with love elements and a game design implemented with the player in mind. Lastly, the game was designed with a good balance of theme and play. I truly feel that *God of War* is a great culmination of Western and Japanese (i.e., Nintendo) game design. Let's hope this is just the beginning for this trend."

—Metal Gear *creator Hideo Kojima*

111 Dragon Force
Saturn • 1996

110 Street Fighter Alpha 2
Arcade • 1996

109 Gradius
Arcade • 1985

108 Super Mario Bros. 2
NES • 1988

107 Ms. Pac-Man
Arcade • 1981

106 Donkey Kong
Game Boy • 1994

105 Karate Champ
Arcade •1984

104 Wipeout
PlayStation • 1995

103 Super Mario RPG
Super NES • 1996

102 Landstalker
Genesis • 1993

When we weren't swearing at its impossible jumps, Sega's answer to *Zelda* blew us away with awesome puzzles and a deep story line. We can't wait to see the series reborn on the PSP.

101 Ninja Gaiden
Xbox • 2004

> **"It's a great culmination of Western and Japanese game design. Let's hope it's just the beginning of this trend."**
>
> —Metal Gear *creator Hideo Kojima, talking about* God of War *(#112)*

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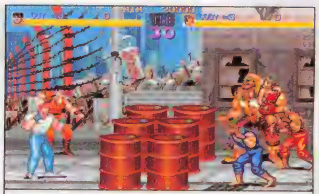
100

Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic

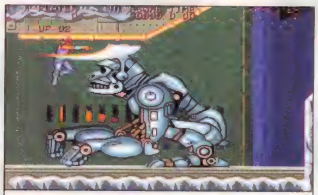
Xbox • 2003 — "What I remember most about the final few months of [developing] *KOTOR* was the huge amount of water-cooler talk surrounding the game. At BioWare we all finish our games multiple times in order to thoroughly test the various paths. We knew we had something special when [everyone] just kept playing it over and over again, and then compared notes, only to find out they had totally different experiences! The multiple paths, the choices between the dark and the light sides, and the many ways you could build your character and party created a totally replayable experience—and a game that was really, really fun!" —*Greg Zeschuk,* KOTOR *coexecutive producer*



99

Final Fight

Arcade • 1989 — A beat-em-up starring a shirtless mayor who whaled on Andre the Giant clones. How could it *not* be awesome?

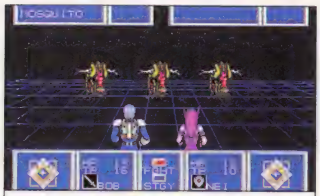


98

Strider

Arcade • 1989

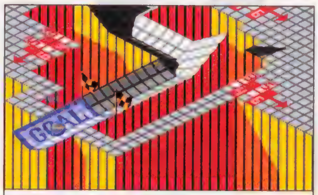
He fought terrorists before fightin' terrorists was cool. Every 7-Eleven should be required by law to have this game.



97

Phantasy Star II

Genesis • 1989 — Tragic death of party member? Check. Epic quest? Yep. Depressing ending? Uh-huh. Eat your heart out, *Final Fantasy VII.*



96

Marble Madness

Arcade • 1984

Not even its pizza-greased trackball kept us from loving this maddeningly addicting hit. *Super Monkey Who?*

NFL
1ST QUARTER 0:26
SAN FRANCISCO 6
WASHINGTON 0

95

NFL Blitz

Arcade • 1997

Reinvented football in a way that hooked so many editors, we had to organize interoffice tourneys.

94

Centipede

Arcade • 1980 — A trackball and strategic use of mushrooms: We didn't know it back then, but both would come in handy later in life.

4TH
3RD TRY
LONG JUMP
51°

93

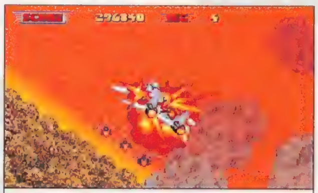
Track & Field

Arcade • 1983 — Tap...... tap......tap.....tap....tap...tap...tap..tap.. tap-tap-tap-tap-tap-tap-tap-taptaptap-taptaptaptaptaptaptaptap.... "Dammit!"

92

Super Smash Bros. Melee

GameCube • 2001 — Billions of things to unlock, plus Yoshi pummeling Pikachu with a bat.

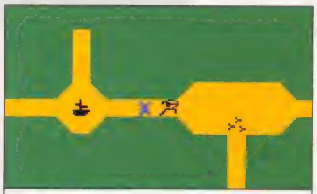


91

After Burner

Arcade • 1987

Enough time has passed—it's OK to admit you wore this bitching, bucking shooter's seatbelt. We did too.



90

Advanced Dungeons & Dragons

Intellivision • 1982 — Early proof that videogames would replace 20-sided dice forever.

> "Don't hang up on me, Mr. Haggar. Your daughter's life may depend on it."
>
> —*Mysterious voice on the phone, from the intro to* Final Fight *(#99)*

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89

Golden Axe

Arcade • 1989

Beat this fantastic fantasy brawler and you see its monsters attack the arcade. How meta is that?

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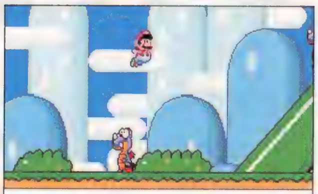
> “Doo doot doot doot doot doo doot doo dooooo-doooooo! Daytoooonaaaa, let’s go away!”
>
> *—Annoying (yet somehow captivating) theme song from* Daytona USA *(#78)*



88 Super Mario World

Super NES • 1991

If you never discovered all 96 level exits, put the magazine down and go do it now. We’ll wait.

87 Missile Command

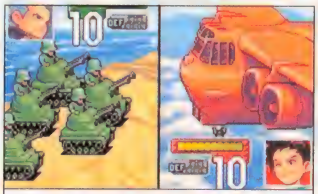
Arcade • 1980

A strange game. The only winning move is not to play. Wouldn’t you prefer a nice game of chess?

86 Ridge Racer

PlayStation • 1995

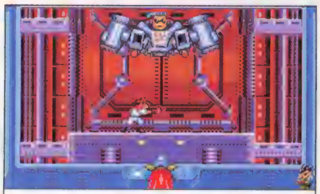
The *Ridge* series debuted with this PS1 launch game—*and promptly drifted right into our hearts!*



85 Advance Wars

GBA • 2001

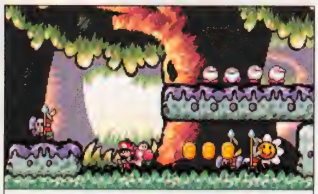
Years ago, Editor-in-Chief Shoe scored this sublime strategy game a 7.5. We all still give him s*** for that.



84 Gunstar Heroes

Genesis • 1993

“We didn’t try to make a hardcore game...we made what we’d want to play.” —*Masato Maegawa, GH Producer*



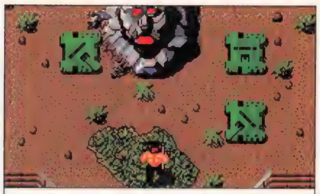
83 Super Mario World 2: Yoshi’s Island

Super NES • 1995 — Besides Baby Mario’s grating cry, we loved every bit of this funky, innovative platformer.

82 Metal Gear Solid 2: Sons of Liberty

PS2 • 2001 — “Konami punked all of us with this ballsy follow-up. Prerelease footage of *MGS* hero Solid Snake was merely a red herring: Snake shows up only for the prologue—the meat of the game stars a whiny metrosexual named Raiden. Come for the stellar gameplay, stick around for the ambitious postmodern story line.”

—Previews Editor Shane Bettenhausen



81 Ikari Warriors

Arcade • 1986 — This two-player top-down bullet barrage out-Rambos the competition with nifty rotary joysticks and drivable tanks.

80 Panzer Dragoon Saga

Saturn • 1998 — A fantastic, magical 3D role-playing game. Too bad only like 50 copies were made....

79 Contra

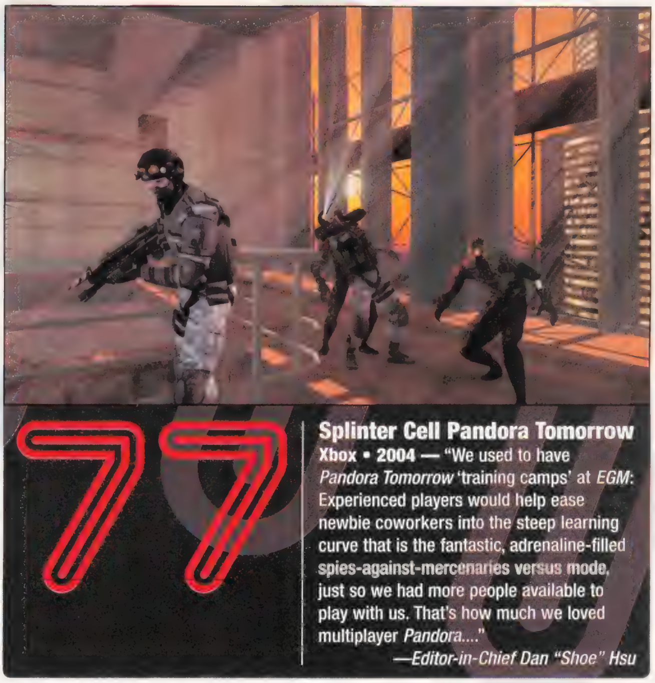
Arcade • 1987

Is that spread-shot power-up worth sacrificing your human co-op partner for? You know the answer.

78 Daytona USA

Arcade • 1994

“Rooooolling staaaaaaaaaaart!” Try to go easy on the car? Never, Mr. Announcer. NEVER!!!



77 Splinter Cell Pandora Tomorrow

Xbox • 2004 — “We used to have *Pandora Tomorrow* ‘training camps’ at *EGM*: Experienced players would help ease newbie coworkers into the steep learning curve that is the fantastic, adrenaline-filled spies-against-mercenaries versus mode, just so we had more people available to play with us. That’s how much we loved multiplayer *Pandora*....”

—Editor-in-Chief Dan “Shoe” Hsu

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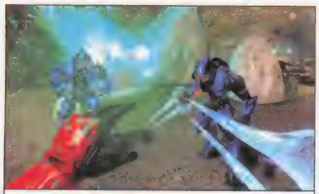


76 Halo 2

Xbox • 2004 — No Earth? No ending? No problem—we're still too busy loving *Halo 2*'s online multiplayer to notice. King of the hill indeed.

75 SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs

PS2 • 2001 — Talk isn't cheap in this first online console war game—it's the key to victory. Boomer, RIP.

Lucca: Where have you been!?

74 Chrono Trigger

Super NES • 1995 — Like Voltron, the talents behind *Final Fantasy*, *Dragon Quest*, and *Dragon Ball Z* came together to create something amazing.

GAUNTLET
LEVEL 1
INSERT COIN
INSERT COIN
INSERT COIN

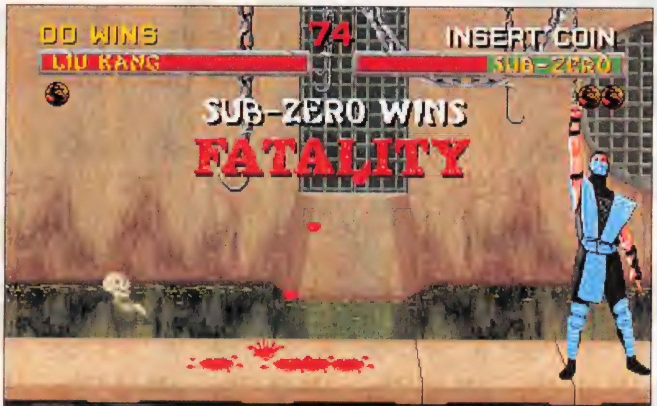
73 Gauntlet

Arcade • 1985 — Wizard may be about to die, but this arcade icon never will. Twenty years later, we're still playing it on our Xbox 360s.

72 Spy Hunter

Arcade • 1983

This ride's tricks made KITT look lamer than David Hasselhoff's singing career. And who can forget the music....



70

Mortal Kombat II

Arcade • 1993 — "OK, *MK2* may stink now—it doesn't stand the test of time like *Street Fighter II* does—but when it first came out, we were waiting in line at the arcades (and fighting for the Super NES controllers) to play it. Combos, air juggles, multiple fatalities, and...friendships? *Mortal Kombat* had become a legitimate fighting game—with plenty of secrets to discover."

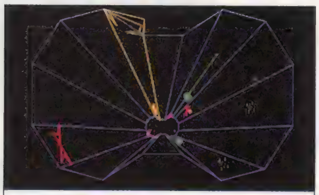
—*Shoe*

0'00"00
READY

69 F-Zero

Super NES • 1991

Taking the checkered flag always feels more satisfying when the speedometer reads 942 km/hr.



71 Tempest

Arcade • 1980 — That spinning controller and the snazzy color vector graphics almost made you believe that, indeed, geometry was fun.

Home 15:00 Visitor
1st
0
0

68 NFL Football

Intellivision • 1980

Playbooks! Formations! Detailed scoreboards! Safeties! An early 98-yard gain in football gaming.

67 Resident Evil 2

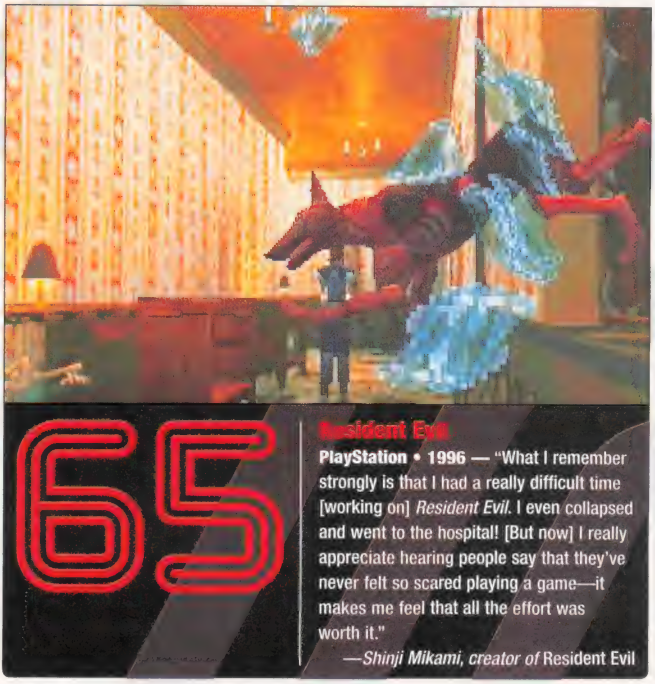
PlayStation • 1998

Two discs? *Four* scenarios to play through? *RE2* blew away our expectations like so much rotting zombie head.

66 R.C. Pro-Am

NES • 1987 — "This was the first game that led to bloodshed between my brother and me. It was not the last." —*Intern Kathleen Sanders*

> "I made many mistakes, [and initially] the results were not so great. Luckily, Capcom allowed me to start over...." —*Hideki Kamiya, director of* Resident Evil 2 *(#67)*

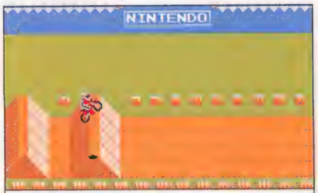


65

Resident Evil

PlayStation • 1996 — "What I remember strongly is that I had a really difficult time [working on] *Resident Evil*. I even collapsed and went to the hospital! [But now] I really appreciate hearing people say that they've never felt so scared playing a game—it makes me feel that all the effort was worth it."

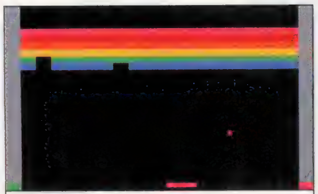
—*Shinji Mikami, creator of* Resident Evil



64 Excitebike

NES • 1985

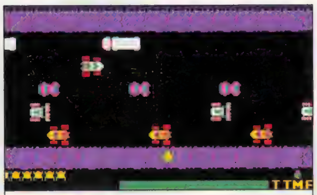
Once you got tired of the game's tracks, you could make your own. Ours were nothing but turbo strips and megajumps.



63 Breakout

Arcade • 1976

Few things in life are as satisfying as getting the ball up a narrow gap on either side and watching it go to town.

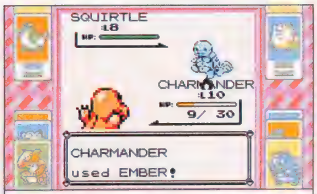


62 Frogger

Arcade • 1981

"Gettin' that frog across the street was my entire life."

—*George Costanza,* Seinfeld

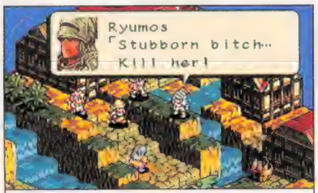


CHARMANDER
used EMBER!

61 Pokémon Red/Blue

Game Boy • 1998

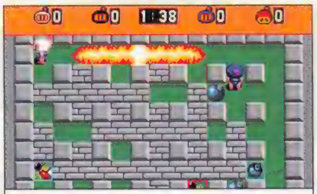
Shave away the cutesy exterior and peel back all the marketing and you'll find a captivating RPG tailor-made for the GB.



Ryumos
「Stubborn bitch…
Kill her!

60 Final Fantasy Tactics

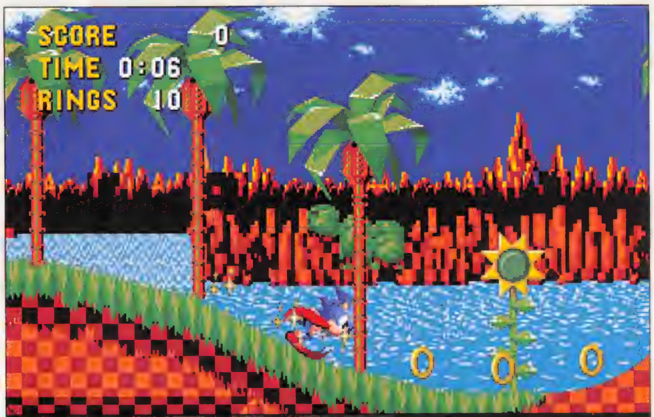
PlayStation • 1998 — One *EGM*er happily spent over 200 hours on this strategy-RPG. That's saying somethin'.



59 Super Bomberman

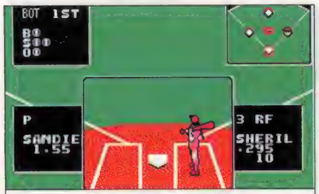
Super NES • 1993

"20-2. That's how bad my high-school lacrosse team lost after half of us stayed up all night droppin' bombs." —*B.I.*



56 Sonic the Hedgehog

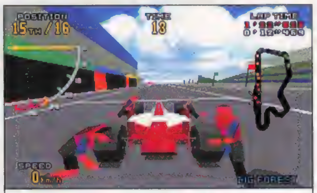
Genesis • 1991 — "Even loyal supporters will concede that nowadays Sonic's debut feels skimpy in the gameplay department, but its impact on other aspects of gaming has not diminished. The classy Art Deco aesthetics (compare its look to plain-Jane Super NES contemporary *Super Mario World*'s) and 'tude-filled protagonist re-invented the platformer." —*S.B.*



58 Baseball Stars

NES • 1989

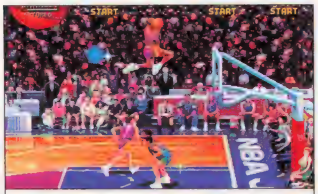
Diving and jumping catches, the abilities to create and trade players, great graphics—the best ball game for years to come.



57 Virtua Racing

Arcade • 1992

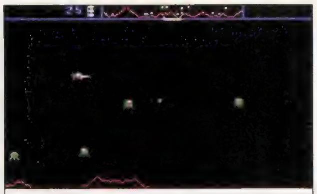
Never before and never again will a bunch of single-colored triangles look so beautiful.



56 NBA Jam

Arcade • 1993

Jam's influence on arcadey sports games is still apparent in modern series like *Street* and *Blitz*.



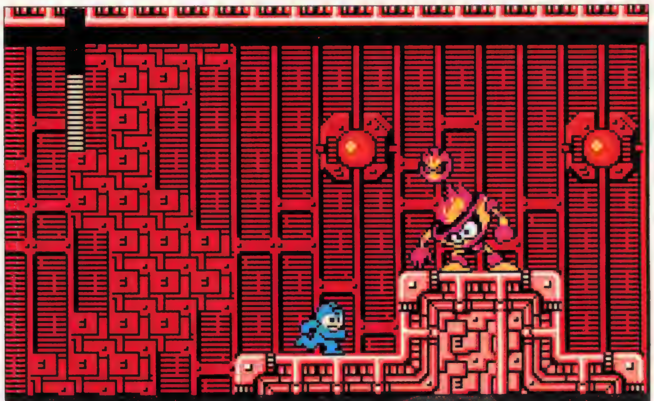
55 Defender

Arcade • 1980

"The only legitimate use of a computer is to play games."

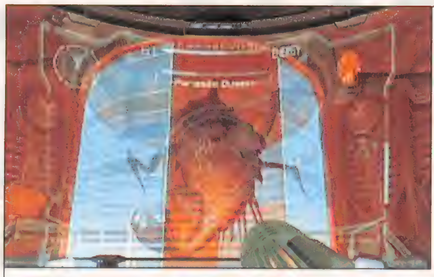
—*Eugene Jarvis, creator of* Defender

> "When you're a kid and get your first bike, you want to go somewhere you've never been before. That's *Pokémon*." —Pokémon *(#61) creator Satoshi Tajiri in* Time



53 Mega Man II

NES • 1989 — "Capcom's first *Mega Man* got a lot of things right—solid visuals, tough platforming, that clever weapon-stealing gimmick—but still felt rough around the edges. *MM2* filled in all the cracks, delivering a massive audiovisual upgrade, new gameplay twists, a far longer quest, and, most important, that *giant* drag-on boss in Dr. Wily's fortress. A screen-filling dragon in 1989? Sold!" —*S.B.*

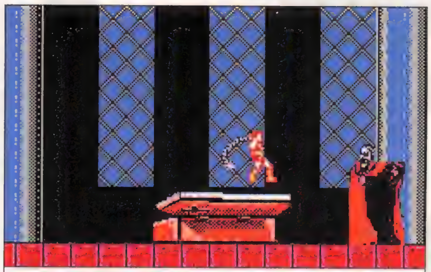


52

Metroid Prime

GameCube • 2002 — "From the beginning of the project until release, a lot of people were skeptical about how we would transform [the series'] 2D action into a 3D first-person shooter. But I think now they understand those fears were unnecessary; Retro created something nobody is hesitant to call a true *Metroid* game." *—Kensuke Tanabe,* MP *supervisor*

> **"I was determined not to make just another first-person shooter where Samus Aran shows up."**
>
> —Metroid Prime *(#52) project supervisor Kensuke Tanabe*



51

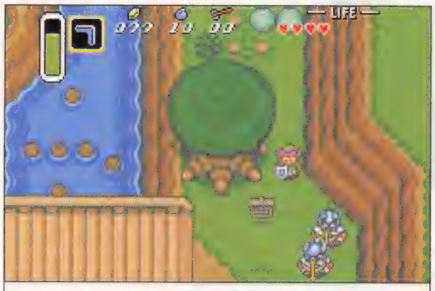
Castlevania

NES • 1987

"During the first few years of its existence, the NES library was a veritable minefield of horrendous third-party releases. Nintendo-published stuff was safe (save for *Urban Champion*), but stinkers like *Chubby Cherub* and *Deadly Towers* waited on store shelves to ambush unsuspecting tykes. Luckily, I spent my hard-earned cash on *Castlevania* after hearing two kids at church complaining that they couldn't get past the Grim Reaper. The Grim Reaper? In a game? Boss!

"*Castlevania* turned out to be just as badass as I'd dreamed, with killer weapons, lushly detailed levels, and spooky tunes. But yeah, the Grim Reaper was a dick."

—S.B.

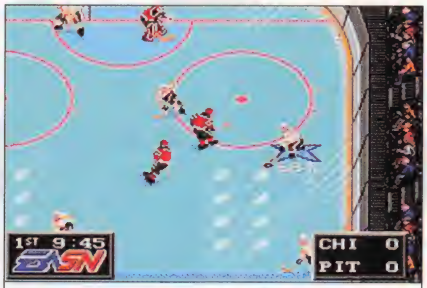


50

The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past

Super NES • 1992

"I was late to the *Zelda* party—*Link to the Past* was my first experience with the series. It was amazing—the dungeons, the boss battles, the music...the hookshot! If I ever fall into a coma, I'm pretty sure a few *Zelda* ringtones can drag me out." *—Reviews Editor Demian Linn*

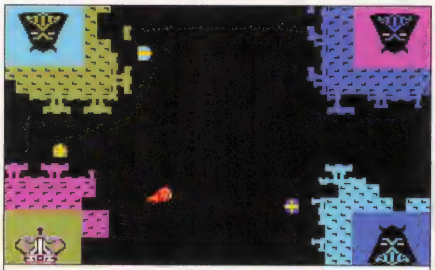


49

NHLPA Hockey '93

Genesis • 1992

"I bet I've logged more hours playing head-to-head *NHLPA '93* than any other multiplayer game. This was before one-timers, before goalie control—the only question was, could you knock me down before I deked your goalie? No, you could not. That's why the score was 14-12." *—D.L.*

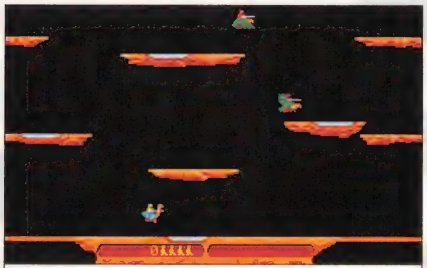


48

Warlords

Arcade • 1980

"I recently stumbled on a four-player tabletop *Warlords* with some friends; we played until my eyeballs couldn't take it anymore. The first great game for more than two players, this is still one of the best multiplayer titles ever. Plus, it's perfect for gambling and drinking games." *—Executive Editor Mark MacDonald*

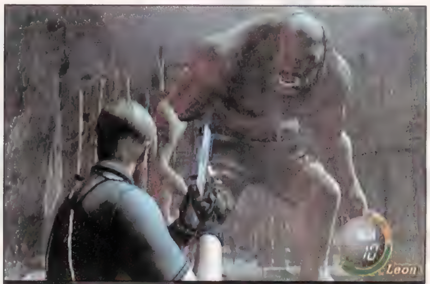


47

Joust

Arcade • 1982

"When ostriches fly, you know something's up. Then they go and add floating eggs, bubbling lava, and the 'unbeatable?' pterodactyl. That's when you realize that, clearly, magic is at work, and you are best off just accepting it and flapping like hell." *—Managing Editor Jennifer Tsao*



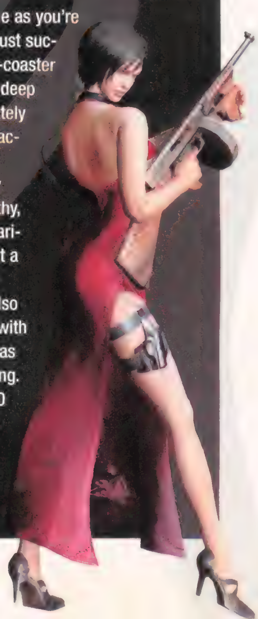
46

Resident Evil 4

GameCube • 2005

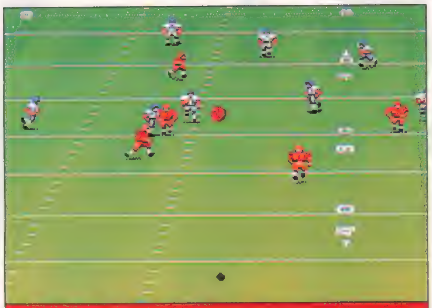
"It's just so new and fresh as a game. It's fun no matter how many times you play it! Creating this game helped me realize that there is nothing we can't achieve, and we should strive for the best without any compromise."

—Hiroyuki Kobayashi, producer of RE4



"As close to a perfect game as you're going to get, *RE4* doesn't just succeed because of the roller-coaster plot, amazing graphics, or deep game mechanics. It ultimately succeeds because of its pacing. You never get bored of the action; any time any sequence borders on lengthy, you're shuffled to a new variant on the experience, be it a puzzle, boss battle, or rail-shooter segment. RE4 is also the first game I've played with an escort element [that] was enjoyable and not frustrating. This game took me over 20 hours, and I enjoyed every single moment of it."

—Cliff Bleszinski,
Gears of War
lead designer



45

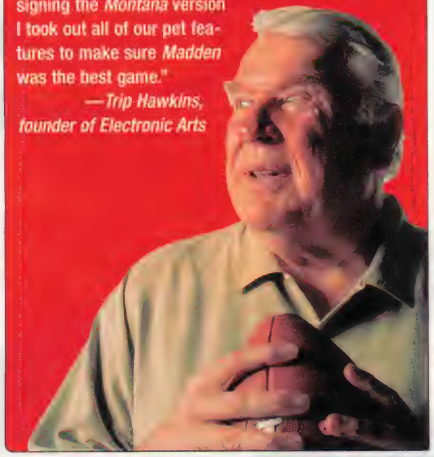
John Madden Football

Genesis • 1990

"My first big design meeting with John was on a train for two days going from Denver to Oakland, watching his two-foot-long unlit cigar slowly disintegrate in the dining car. When you meet with him privately, every sentence contains the F-word; one of his most amazing talents is his ability to switch that off when he goes on the air.

"Sega [actually] wanted me to cancel the release of *Madden* and repurpose it as *Joe Montana Football* because Sega's development team had failed. [Electronic Arts executive] Bing Gordon wanted to do it, but I knew *Madden* was 'The Franchise,' so instead I convinced Sega to give us a $2 million check and we made both games. Both ended up in the top five [best-selling games] that year. Of course, in redesigning the *Montana* version I took out all of our pet features to make sure *Madden* was the best game."

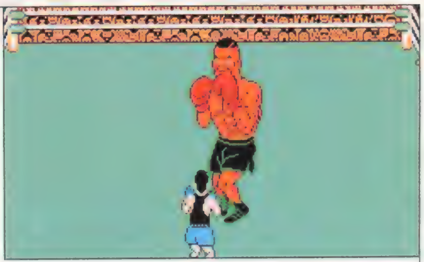
—Trip Hawkins, founder of Electronic Arts



44

Mike Tyson's Punch-Out!!

NES • 1987



"Make it quick...I want to retire!" *—Glass Joe*

"I was a boxing teacher...at the military academy!" *—Von Kaiser*

"I'll give you a **TKO from Tokyo!**" *—Piston Honda*

"I have my weakness. But I won't tell you! Ha, ha, ha!" *—King Hippo*

"I have purred long enough. Now hear me roar!" *—Great Tiger*

"My barber didn't know when to quit...do you?" *—Bald Bull*

"Would you like **some punch to drink?** Ha, ha, ha!" *—Soda Popinski*

"I don't smoke...but tonight, I'm gonna smoke you!" *—Super Macho Man*

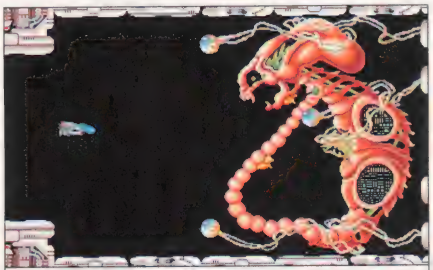
"They say I can't lose. **I say you can't win!**" *—Mike Tyson*

43

Tron

Arcade • 1982

"The futuristic neo-neon cabinet, digitized movie tunes, and challenging lightcycle stages made this my first stop at the arcade—even though I could never get past the third set of stages. Four great games in one. Well, OK, three—I always thought the grid bugs stage was kinda B.S." *—Shoe*



42

R-Type

Arcade • 1987

"Finally, a shooter that wasn't just reflexes—you had to think about what power-ups to get and which to pass by, where to position your ship, and how to use the awesome Force pod. And that third level—a gigantic, ship, multiple screens long, that doubles as the boss? Brilliant. Tough as nails and fun as hell." *—M.M.*

41

Double Dragon

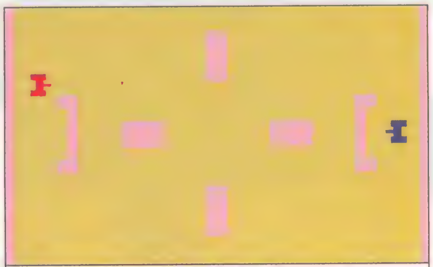
Arcade • 1987

"Forget the (mostly) lackluster sequels, home versions of varying quality, crappy cartoon, and silly straight-to-video film—when it debuted in the arcade, *Double Dragon* was *it*. Accessible and fun from the start but with plenty of depth to explore, it spawned a legion of imitations that rarely surpassed it." *—M.M.*

40

Zelda II: The Adventure of Link

NES • 1988 — "Listen up, haters: *Adventure of Link* is one of Nintendo's gutsiest sequels ever—an ambitious follow-up that abandons all of its predecessor's conventions. *Link* simultaneously delivers an engrossing RPG (see: experience points, field map, magic system) and a sweet action game (tight control, big bosses)." *—S.B.*



39

Combat

Atari 2600 • 1977

"Ah, remember when consoles came with a killer app packed right in the box? For the four years we played our Atari, my family never got tired of *Combat*. And I don't care what anyone says—invisible tanks with bouncy bullets still kick ass." *—M.M.*

> **"When you meet with [John Madden] privately, every sentence contains the F-word."**
>
> *—Electronic Arts founder Trip Hawkins on the namesake of* John Madden Football *(#45)*

38

Asteroids

Arcade • 1979

"With its simple gameplay concept (try not to die as you blow away an asteroid belt), nifty vector-graphics look, and surprisingly satisfying sense of inertia, *Asteroids* remained an arcade staple years after its debut. Not bad for a game without a joystick."

—*S.B.*

22
PUSH START BUTTON
AKIRA
SARAH

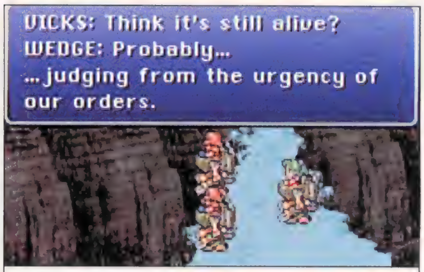
37

Virtua Fighter 2

Arcade • 1995

"For the entire summer of '95, *VF2 owned* me. It left me penniless and a social outcast—I spent almost every night playing it at the Burger King castle (not exactly the town hot spot)—but it was worth it all just to master Akira's tough-as-hell Stun Palm of Doom."

—*B.I.*


VICKS: Think it's still alive?
WEDGE: Probably...
...judging from the urgency of our orders.

36

Final Fantasy III

Super NES • 1994

"When *FFIII* finally arrived in stores, I learned it was going to set me back $80. $80! That was a lot of money for me back then. So I hesitated buying it...for about 0.5 seconds. Honestly, I would've spent five times that to get what turned out to be one of the best RPGs ever."

—*Shoe*

35

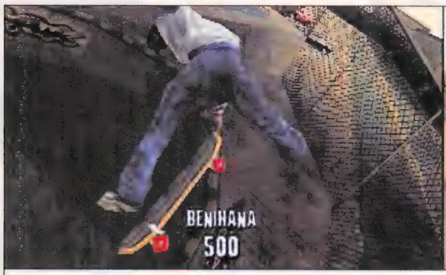
Tomb Raider

Multiplatform • 1996

"[Lara Croft's] a bit of everything. She's like every kind of sexy Italian actress I've ever watched, and yet she's also that guy from *Crocodile Hunter* in Australia—completely in love with danger. And then there's this whole personality that's emerged from me. I kept thinking, 'I can't do this; I'm a serious actor.' And then suddenly I was in my little outfit on top of a mountain in Iceland with some dogs pulling me in a sled and some guns attached to me. And I thought, 'Yeah! This is exactly who I am!' I think I'm ridiculously brave, to a fault. I'd like to think that [Lara] fights for the right things and doesn't like injustice. She's a good friend, she cares, and she would stand up for somebody if they were in a spot. I like that."

—*Angelina Jolie, star of the* Tomb Raider *flicks*

She is so gonna raid the s* outta that tomb.**



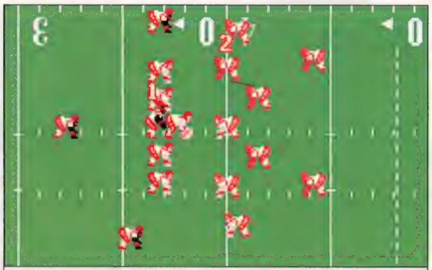
34

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater

PlayStation • 1999

"Former Editor Shawn Smith and I named our H.O.R.S.E. game the nonsensically vulgar 'T.U.R.D.E.A.T.' We took frequent T.U.R.D.E.A.T. breaks throughout the day, and once found ourselves playing in front of a bewildered PR dude for the game's publisher. As a goof, we asked him if the Dreamcast version included T.U.R.D.E.A.T. Thinking it was the mode's actual name, he asked the developers, and of course they had no idea what he was talking about—and became concerned that they were missing some hidden feature. Reveling in the confusion, we finally let 'em know it was just our custom name for H.O.R.S.E. It's a mode we jokingly inquire about for every *Tony Hawk* sequel since."

—*Senior Editor Crispin Boyer*



33

Tecmo Bowl

NES • 1989 — "Sorry, Kristen Bates. If it weren't for this gridiron title—and my obsession one Sunday afternoon with beating every team in the game as the Chicago Bears—I might've gone into the other room at Steve Bowman's house to kiss you."

—*B.I.*

32

Robotron: 2084

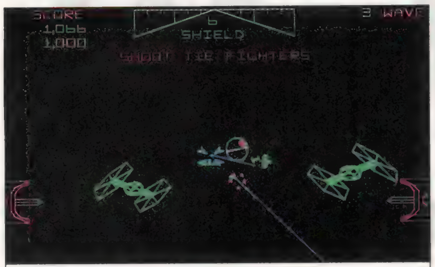
Arcade • 1982

"*Robotron* is the id of arcade gaming—all impulse and instinct and reflex. If you take the time to wait for conscious thought to move from your brain to your hands, you're dead—simple as that. It's just so *pure*... probably why it still holds up and will likely never feel dated."

—*M.M.*

> "Sorry, Kristen Bates. If it weren't for my obsession [with this game], I might've kissed you."
>
> —*News Editor Bryan Intihar on the sacrifices he made for* Tecmo Bowl *(#33)*

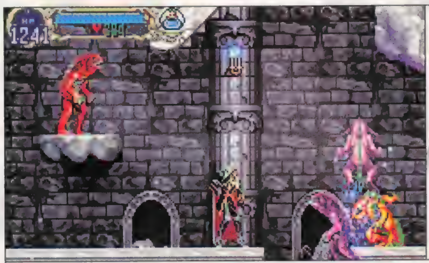
> "Since there hadn't been a *Metroid* for quite some time, we thought, why not try to make a better version of *Metroid*?" *—Koji Igarashi, producer of* Castlevania: SOTN *(#30)*



31 Star Wars

Arcade • 1983 — "It was like developer Atari invented a tractor beam for quarters with this mind-blowing vector-graphics shooter. 'I have you now,' threatens a digitized Darth Vader—way before he blathered on about sand—near the game's finale. You got that right, Darth."

—C.B.



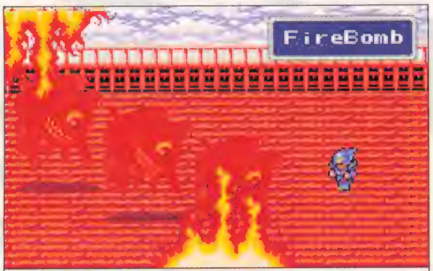
30 Castlevania: Symphony of the Night

PlayStation • 1997

"[When we started working on it], this game was part of Japan's *Dracula X Castlevania* subseries, so I felt that I had more freedom to take it in a different direction. It was a one-off project, and we basically just did whatever we wanted! So, I asked questions like, 'Is fighting with a whip even fun?' and 'Isn't this macho-man Belmont guy kind of boring?'

"Ultimately, we incorporated a lot of new ideas and took the game in a more exploration-based direction. Since there hadn't been a *Metroid* for quite some time, we thought, why not try to make a better version of *Metroid*, but in the world of *Castlevania*?"

—Koji Igarashi, producer of Castlevania: SOTN

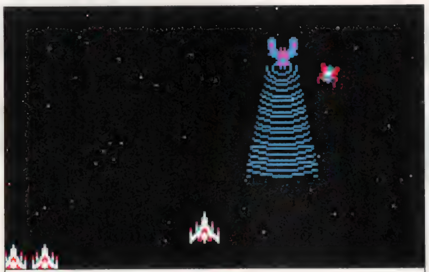


29 Final Fantasy II

Super NES • 1991

"It wasn't the first *FF* (it was actually, uh, the fourth—long story), but it defined the series: The active-time battle system made combat exciting, and while the story was badly translated, it was never dull. Redemption, heroics, space whales. Who could ask for more?"

—1UP.com Features Editor Jeremy Parish

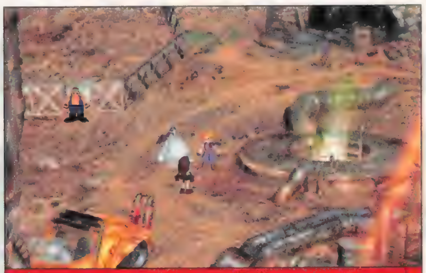


28 Galaga

Arcade • 1981

"It wasn't Luke finding out his kissy friend is actually his sister. Or Spock sacrificing himself at the end of *Star Trek II*. No, the greatest space tragedy of the '80s was when you let one of the big *Galaga* bugs capture your ship before realizing it was your last one."

—Shoe



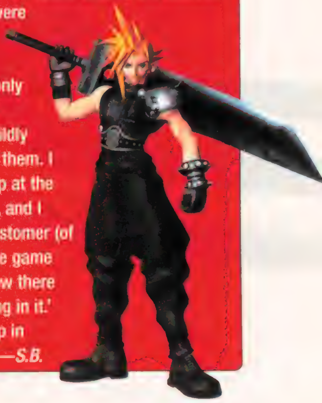
27 Final Fantasy VII

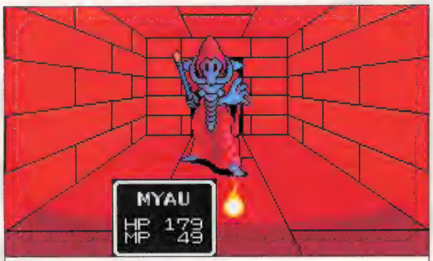
PlayStation • 1997

"The role-playing game that put the genre on the map, Square's legendary *FFVII* infused the previously nerds-only series with slick CG cut-scenes, 3D graphics, and a dark 'n' edgy story line. The underlying mechanics didn't deviate too far from classic *Final Fantasy* form, but the new postindustrial flavor and narrative gravitas proved a perfect fit for the franchise. Looking back, *FFVII* feels a bit weird now—it straddles the line between goofy old-school RPGs and gritty modern fare—but its ambition and mammoth scope cannot be denied.

"Still, I have to wonder if some among the millions who purchased *FFVII* were merely swept up by the bitchin' commercial (that showed only flashy CG clips), blissfully unaware of the wildly complex RPG awaiting them. I worked at a game shop at the time of *FFVII*'s release, and I distinctly recall one customer (of the many) returning the game because he 'didn't know there was going to be reading in it.' Did I mention I grew up in Kentucky?"

—S.B.



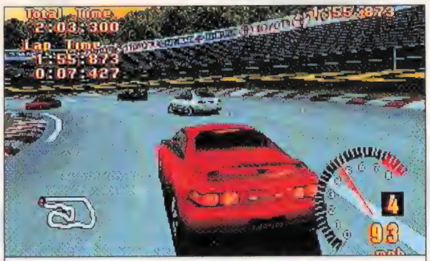


26 Phantasy Star

Sega Master System • 1988

"This pioneering epic actually came out (in America, at least) more than a year before *Dragon Warrior* and *Final Fantasy*, and it outclasses both in just about every category. Groundbreaking 3D dungeons, a grandiose scope (three planets to explore), and stunning visuals made *Phantasy Star* an instant classic."

—S.B.



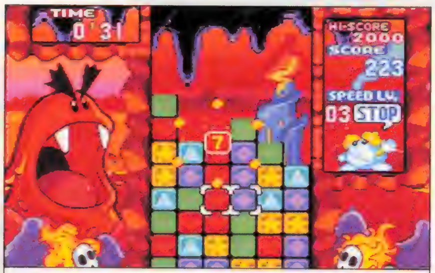
25 Gran Turismo

PlayStation • 1998

"I was a road tester for a car magazine when *Gran Turismo* came out—it was my job to review cars. But *GT* did such a good job simulating what it's like to drive at ridiculous speeds that I didn't need to do it in real life anymore. Now I review games instead...I think I made the right choice."

—D.L.

> **"The second [possible name] was *Zulu Gold*. Without Cheech and Chong as spokespeople, I don't think [it would've] worked."** —Pitfall! *(#18) creator David Crane*

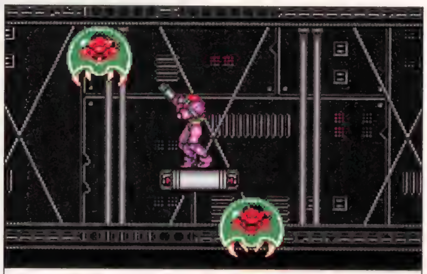


24

Tetris Attack

Super NES • 1996

"Once, my combo count in a head-to-head match got so high that it crashed the game. Strangely enough, I wasn't mad—I considered it a nerdy victory of sorts. I must be pretty badass to crash a puzzle game with my skills alone! We still play this game every few weeks—it's that good." —*Shoe*

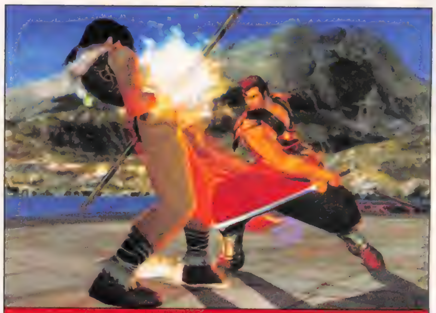


23

Super Metroid

Super NES • 1994

"Graphics, gameplay, control, music (oh man, the music!)—*Super Metroid* lived up to its name in every single category. Its minimal storyline even climaxes in a surprising final boss encounter people still talk about today. If you missed it, track it down and play it today—you won't be sorry." —*M.M.*



22

Soul Calibur

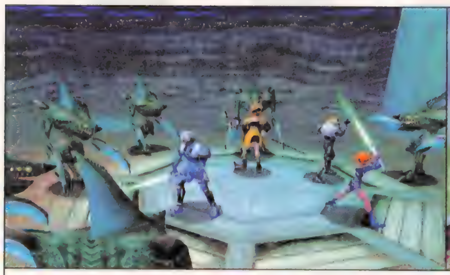
Dreamcast • 1999

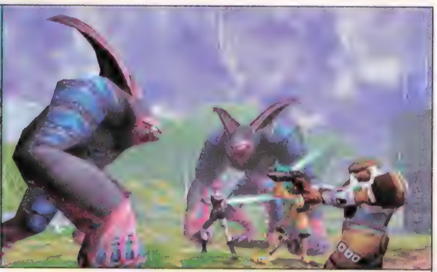
"Step 1: Boot up game. Step 2: Play game. Step 3: Wipe drool off of controllers.

"They say graphics don't make a game, but they sure made this one. Perfectly animated warriors, gorgeous backdrops, and beautiful bursts of sparks when swords clash...plus a fighting-game system that rewards technique and clever play...it's enough to make you go, '*Tekken* who?'

"It was pathetic how addicted we were to *Soul Calibur* when it first came out. We took time off of deadlines to organize interoffice tournaments, complete with seeds, brackets, and prizes. We even came up with a leaderboard of the top 10 players in the office at any given time for post-tourney bragging rights.

"But my most nerd-rific moment came one night at a bar. Out of the blue, I just looked at my coworker with a big smile and said—with plenty of emotion—'Man, *Soul Calibur* is so good. I *love* that game.' And I know that wasn't just the booze talking...." —*Shoe*



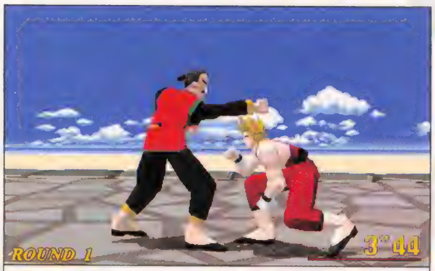


21

Phantasy Star Online

Dreamcast • 2001

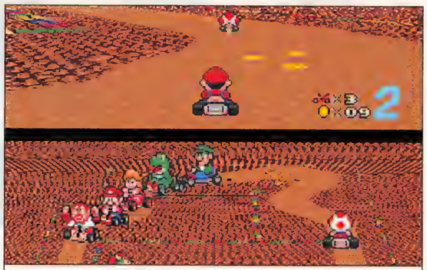
"I was reviewing an early version of *PSO* we got right around the holidays and I was in love—I just couldn't stop playing. I remember it was about 3 a.m. and I was just about to finally kill De Rol Le—that evil second boss fish—when suddenly everything went dark; it was a bitterly cold Chicago winter and my space heater and TV equipment all running at once blew a fuse. The fuse box was locked in the basement, and my landlord had already left for Christmas. The only working outlet was the one my refrigerator was plugged into. So I did what I had to: moved the TV, Dreamcast, and couch into the kitchen, unplugged the fridge, and kept playing." —*M.M.*



20

Virtua Fighter

Arcade • 1993 — "The boxy characters and stark arenas look bizarre now, but back in the day this stuff looked like the future. Which it was. But *VF*'s quality wasn't based on visuals—spectacular gameplay (a simple three-button setup masks oceanic depth) and real-world fighting styles (no fireballs or babalities here) truly advanced the genre." —*S.B.*

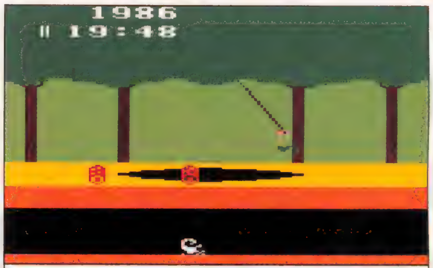


19

Super Mario Kart

Super NES • 1992

"Trigger a speed-boosting 'shroom right before you hit the jump bump in this game's first Ghost Valley course and you'll soar to the other side of the track, shaving seconds off your time. Try finding shortcuts that cool in *Gran Turismo*." —*C.B.*



18

Pitfall!

Atari 2600 • 1982

"The working title was *Jungle Runner*, and it came dangerously close to going to market with that name. The second choice was *Zulu Gold*. Without Cheech and Chong as spokespeople, I don't think that name would have worked." —*David Crane, creator of* Pitfall!

17

Halo: Combat Evolved

Xbox • 2001

"*Halo* is awesome because it's solid and familiar. It's not necessarily groundbreaking—much of the fiction is derivative. But, it's put together well and it knew exactly what to borrow and what to invent."

—Randy Pitchford, president of Gearbox Software (Halo *for PC*)

"Ask any hardcore PC first-person shooter fan how to play their favorite genre and they'll always respond 'keyboard and mouse.' And yet *Halo* controls flawlessly on the Xbox controller, proving to an entire generation that the genre is doable on a console. Millions of gamers can't be wrong.

"[But] *Halo* didn't become a hit simply by having great controls. Bungie kept a clear and obvious visual consistency for the player; you could always figure out where to go, what your objectives were, and how you were affecting the enemies' artificial intelligence. Add in a memorable theme song, some great vehicles, and simple but deep multiplayer and you've got yourself a breakout phenomenon."

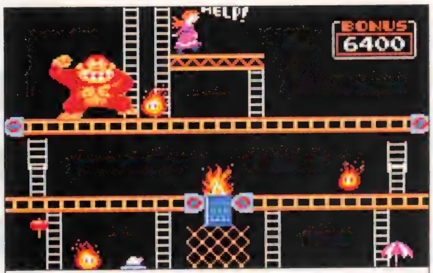
—Cliff Bleszinski, lead designer at Epic (Unreal, Gears of War)

16

GoldenEye 007

Nintendo 64 • 1997

"[Back when] PC shooters [ruled the genre], a company called Rare proved that you could, in fact, make a great console FPS. *GoldenEye* wowed everyone with a stellar single-player campaign and an addictive splitscreen multiplayer mode. The world would never be the same." *—Cliff Bleszinski, designer of* Unreal



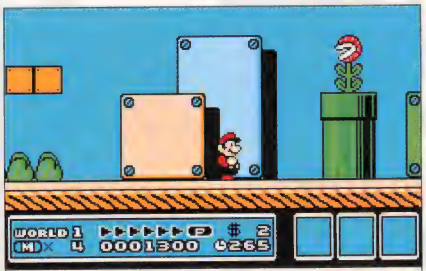
15

Donkey Kong

Arcade • 1981

"If there had not been *Donkey Kong*, I might be living a different life today. I don't know if it would be better or worse, but I like being surrounded by *Donkey Kong* and *Mario* and *Pikmin* and my other friends. [Maybe] it is about time to create new companions...."

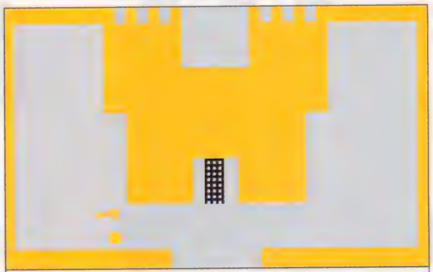
—DK *creator Shigeru Miyamoto*



14

Super Mario Bros. 3

NES • 1990 — "I still remember the first time I ran, then launched into the air to follow a secret trail of coins hidden in the sky. Mario can now fly! From that very first level to the airship armadas at the end, *SMB3* is unforgettable. Many (including me) still argue this is the best *Mario* game ever made." *—Shoe*



13

Adventure

Atari 2600 • 1978

"Before there was *Zelda*, there was *Adventure*. I played this game so much that I could actually navigate the entire game—including the catacombs—with my eyes shut. It was the first time a game felt like its own little self-contained world for you to explore. And they aren't ducks, dammit, they're *dragons*." *—M.M.*

12

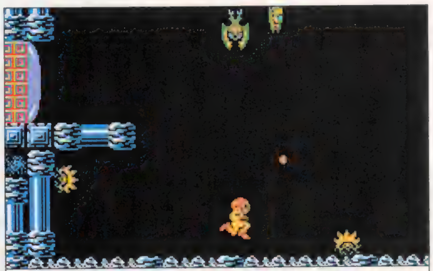
Metal Gear Solid

PlayStation • 1998 — "[*Metal Gear* creator Hideo] Kojima really knows how to create characters and surprise players. It shouldn't surprise you that *Metal Gear Solid* was a huge inspiration for *Splinter Cell*. It was a pioneer for both the genre and the quality of directing, and I'm always flattered when people make comparisons between the two series."

—Mathieu Ferland, executive producer of Splinter Cell

"*MGS* brought story, script, characters, voice acting, and cinemas to amazing levels. It was not only a landmark—it's a guiding light to the future of videogames." *—Denis Dyack, head of Silicon Knights* (MGS: The Twin Snakes)

> **"I'm always flattered when people make comparisons between [*Metal Gear Solid* and *Splinter Cell*]."**
>
> *—Mathieu Ferland, executive producer of* Splinter Cell *(#146)*



11

Metroid

NES • 1987

"When we were working on the original *Metroid*, we didn't have much development experience. We were trying to establish a brand-new type of game: the sci-fi adventure. Even though we [had to feel] our way to completion, we never lost our ambition.

"Now, looking back at how we were at that time, our attitude was like that of Samus Aran, who had to rush headlong into the vast and dangerous planet Zebes without hesitation.

"We will keep on fighting and evolving with her in order to reach the goal that nobody has ever seen before."

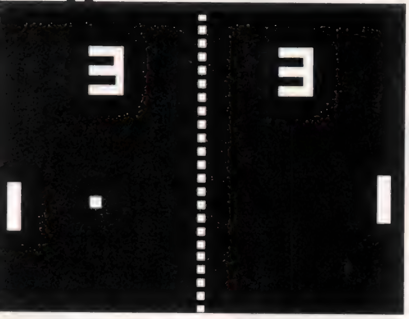
—Yoshio Sakamoto, director of Metroid

10

Pong

Arcade • 1972

"Great for its time? *Pong* was practically the *only* game of its time—every other title on this list owes this simple table-tennis simulator a massive debt. Unlike other prehistoric arcade fare (I'm looking at you, *Space War*), *Pong* was legitimately exciting, thanks to its nifty dial controllers. Twirling your knob to the increasing tension of a long volley until finally climaxing in a point...wait, what was I talking about? Hell, *Pong* is still fun today. Just a few months back, I lost huge sums of money to a fellow *EGM* staffer betting on a two-player *Pong* variant in *Flipnic* (PS2). The elder statesman of gaming's still got it." —*S.B.*



Grand Theft Auto III

PS2 • 2001

9

"Once I played it for 10 minutes and realized the range of possibility in it, I was blown away, just because I understood that, oh, I can go anywhere in this city and I can pick any car. I can go in there and be an ambulance driver and save all those people. I can go in and be a taxi driver. I can go in and be a badass. I feel like I'm controlling my own story. I can ignore the missions entirely. It's a toy for me—a toy world. I was like, wow, this is cool. And then I knew, OK, this is gonna be big."

—*Will Wright, creator of* The Sims *and* SimCity

"*Grand Theft Auto III* has missions? For my first few hours of playing, I couldn't tell. I got so caught up in just driving around in different cars and launching off ramps, I forgot *GTA3* wasn't a 'driving around in different cars and launching off ramps' simulator—that it has this entire cinematic Mafioso story line as well. That was the beauty of this game: It wasn't about the violence or controversy; it was about playing something however you want." —*Shoe*

8

The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time

N64 • 1998

"Coming six painfully long years after the previous console *Zelda* effort (Super NES classic *A Link to the Past*), *Ocarina* actually managed to exceed gamers' lofty expectations. In much the same way that *Super Mario 64* successfully brought that series' gameplay into 3D, this new *Zelda* kept everything that we loved about the old games—labyrinthine dungeons, tricky bosses, and oodles of inventive equipment—while completely overhauling the control and combat to take advantage of the scope of 3D visuals. At the same time, Nintendo wisely chose to impart a darker, more narrative mood, thereby appealing to older gamers who grew up with the original *Zelda*.

"My most potent memory of *Ocarina* (apart from scoring one of the swanky limited-edition gold carts that Nintendo foisted upon an eager fan base) seems positively innocuous now: I was in awe the first time Link reaches the vast, sprawling Hyrule Field. Never before had a game created such a concrete feeling of physical space. Truly epic." —*S.B.*

7

Space Invaders

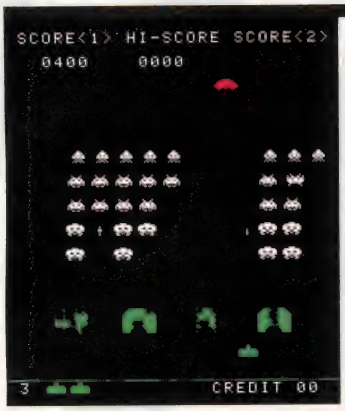
Arcade • 1978

"At the time, Atari's block-breaking game *Breakout* was popular in Japan. I thought the game was fun, too, and so I began making a game using [*Breakout*] as inspiration. I decided to change the blocks to targets that had shapes and make a shooting game—a shoot-out between those targets and the player. For the targets, I tested out tanks, planes, and soldiers, but I was stuck because none of them seemed to fit the image of the game. But then a movie called *Star Wars* came out, so I took a note from that and made it a space game, and when I tried changing the targets to aliens, it looked very smooth—that settled it.

"I started making *Space Invaders* around the summer of 1977. I did all the design, graphics, and programming on my own. In June 1978, I finished the game and had an unveiling, but the [arcade] operators didn't like it, and we received almost no orders. Many of the operators were older gentlemen; they said it was too hard. I don't think they knew how to deal with the targets shooting back—shooting games up to that point had been about the player shooting one way at targets, and this game went against that logic. But when the game went out into the world, its fresh approach brought thrills and excitement mainly to young people, and I think that led to it being a big hit.

"The head of my company forced us to change the name of the game to *Space Invaders*, even though I had named it *Space Monsters*. I remember being really unhappy about that. This may come as a surprise to people—the game didn't leave me with a very good impression. But now time has passed, and when I think about how much this game has contributed to advancements in Japanese gaming, I'm very proud that I was able to create it."

—Tomohiro Nishikado,
Space Invaders *creator*



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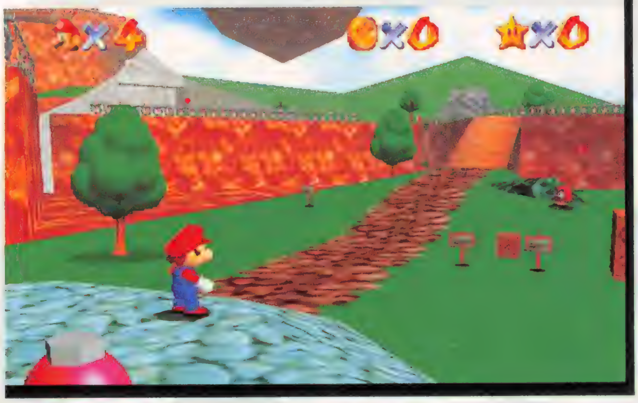


Super Mario 64

N64 • 1996

"*Super Mario 64* had no guns, no vehicles, no additional playable characters—and it still managed to offer something fresh in every level [through] clever use of Mario's moves and brilliant level design. I mean, I can distinctly remember almost every one of those levels and its stages—I can't say that for any other game I've ever played, including games we've made here at Insomniac...and I've played our games far more times. *Mario 64* not only set the standard for modern platformers at the time, but it demonstrated a level of excellence and innovation in design that I think few games today have achieved."

—Ted Price, designer of the
Ratchet & Clank *series (PS2)*

"I'm not always proud of my actions, but back during the summer of '96, I've never had so much fun being so damn bad. I was in high school then, and a few buddies and I simply couldn't wait for the U.S. Nintendo 64 launch to play the first 3D *Mario*, so we convinced our Richie Rich friend to import the system and game from Japan—for about $600. That's bad enough, but here's where it gets worse: Each of us took the system home and finished *Super Mario 64* before our wealthy (and ignorant) pal even found his first star. Was I in the wrong? Yeah. Should I have been punished? Probably. If I could go back in time, would I do it again? Oh, hell yes!"

—B.I.

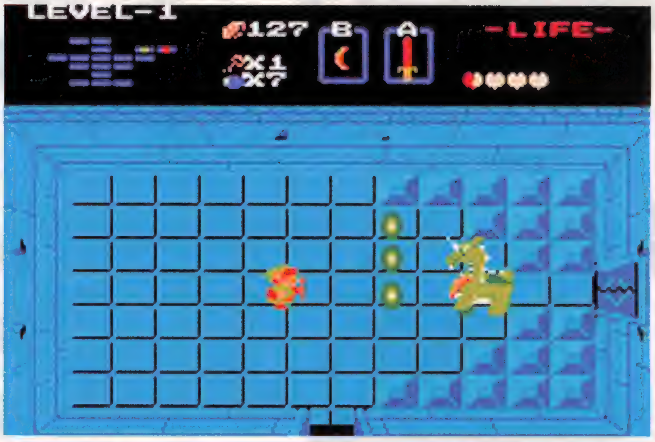
5

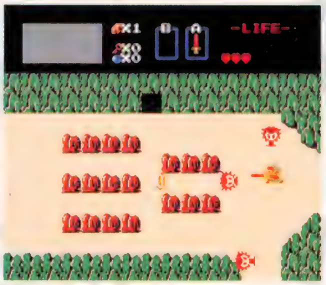
The Legend of Zelda

NES • 1987

"As a child, *Zelda* creator Shigeru Miyamoto famously explored the countryside near his home in Kyoto, Japan. This kid was a junior vagabond: He'd traverse dense forests, creepy graveyards, and secluded mountain paths on a quest to better understand his world. Young Shigeru was even an amateur spelunker—he once brought his own lantern from home to help navigate a cave he discovered deep in the woods. And while it's unclear whether this insatiable curiosity ever led our future game designer to a buried treasure trove or a distressed princess, it certainly inspired *The Legend of Zelda*.

"After upending the world of action games with *Super Mario Bros.*, Miyamoto once again reimagined the concept of game design with *Zelda*. Here, the player embarks on an open-ended adventure through a massive fantasy world. It's tough to convey just how groundbreaking this game truly was when it hit stores in 1987. Sure, we'd already seen ambitious PC role-playing fare like *Ultima* and *Might and Magic*, but a console action title with this much depth was utterly unprecedented. As you guided elfin hero Link through the ancient land of Hyrule, every aspect of the game fell perfectly into place—clever puzzles, cool enemies, creative bosses, and a nearly endless torrent of spectacular secrets (including a full second quest after you finish the game).





X0
X0
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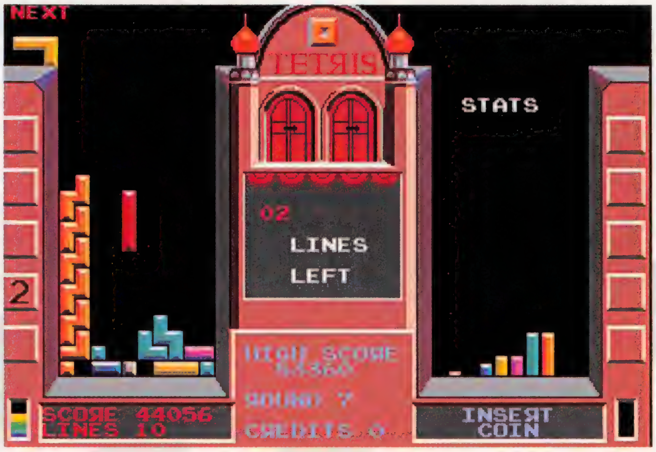
A
-LIFE-

"This is going to sound cheesy, but I still clearly remember what I felt when I solved that second quest some 18 years ago—that I'd never played a game like *Zelda*, that I really loved videogames, and that I might be too old to dress up as Link for Halloween."

—*S.B.*

NEXT
NEXT
TETRIS
STATS
LINES LEFT
HIGH SCORE
ROUND
CREDITS



4

Tetris

Multiplatform • 1988

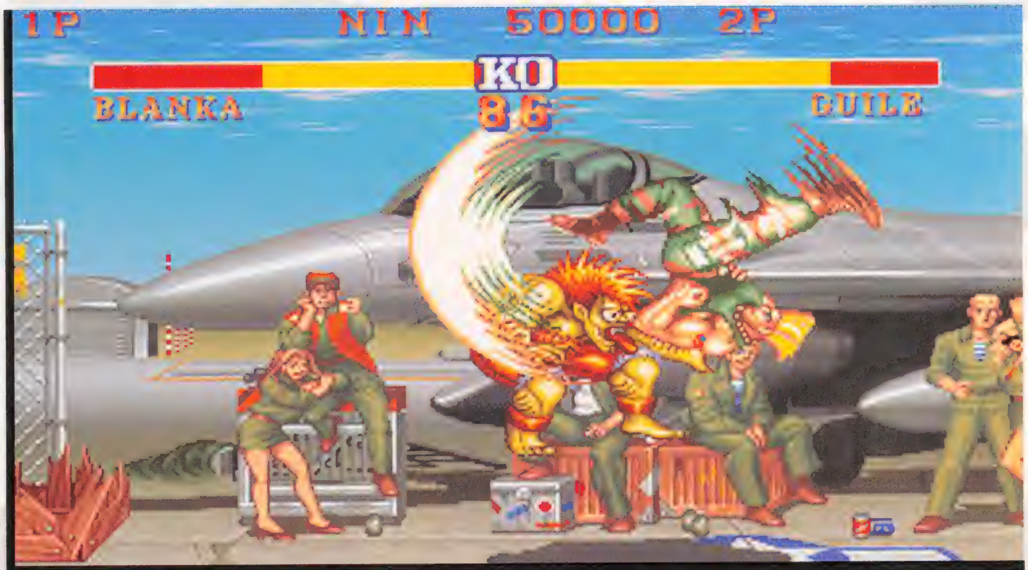
"It's the king of games. There's nothing left to add or subtract from *Tetris*' design; in a way, it's nearly perfect. Logic and speed, the left brain and the right brain, intensity and relief—all done in only four blocks. This almost-miraculous game taught us the very important fact that a game's fun is not bound by its screen resolution. It proved to us that games can be a universal tongue, crossing language, borders, ethnicity, age, and platform."

—*Tetsuya Mizuguchi, designer of puzzle games* Lumines *(PSP) and* Meteos *(DS), and former head of United Game Artists*

The First Blockaholic

We wish the rumors were true for the sake of a good story, but vodka binges played no part in creating this block-dropping blockbuster. "I don't even like vodka," says Alexey Pajitnov, who dreamed up *Tetris* in his Moscow apartment in 1985. After punching his program into the appropriately Russki-sounding Electronika-60 computer, he encountered a different addictive substance: his own game. "I had no score, no acceleration [of the pieces]," he says, "but I couldn't finish these parts...because I just sat and played with my half-working program." His reward for creating the most cloned puzzle game of all time? Zilch—at least at first. "I didn't get any money for *Tetris* for the first 10 years," says Pajitnov, now working at Microsoft.

3



Street Fighter II

Arcade • 1991

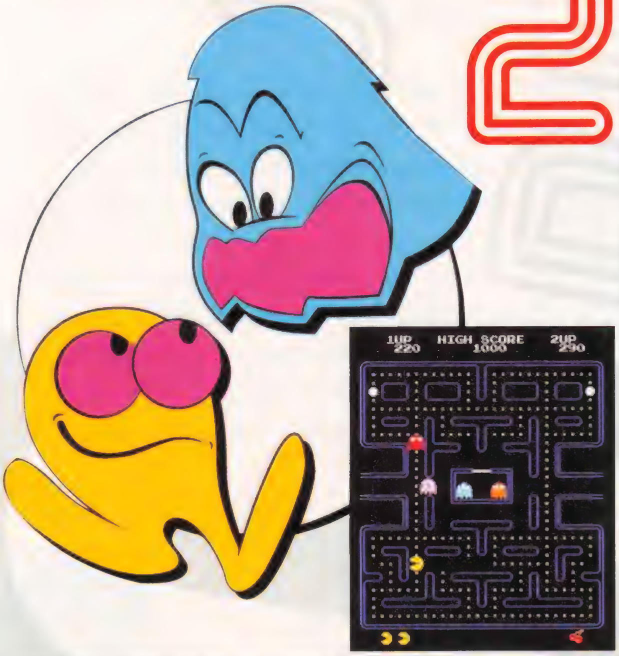
"We were told that [the original] *Street Fighter* was popular overseas, but I wasn't satisfied with many aspects of the [first] game. I wanted to play as a character that best suited me, and there weren't too many games where you could choose your player at the time. That was my initial motivation [for creating *Street Fighter II*]."

—*Akira Nishitani,* Street Fighter II *creator*

"One day, I stood up and walked out in the middle of my small, 16-student college math class because I couldn't stand it any longer—I had to play *Street Fighter II* right then and there. The other students stared and my teacher looked at me funny, but I didn't say a word or offer any explanation. I silently marched straight to the local arcade, cashed in a ten, and spent the rest of the afternoon shoryukening away. Spending money and time that I really couldn't afford...such was the draw of this incredible game."

—*Shoe*

2



Pac-Man

Arcade • 1980

"The whole thing actually started with me walking around arcades watching how many boys were playing and the fact that all the machines were about killing aliens, tanks, or people. Girls were simply not interested, and I suddenly had motivation for my work: I wanted game arcades to shed this dark, sinister image, and it seemed to me that the way to raise the atmosphere of a place is to entice girls to come in. [So] the whole purpose of *Pac-Man* was to target women and couples, and get a different type of player involved.

"So there I was, wondering what sort of things women would look for in a videogame. I sat in cafés and listened to what they were talking about; mostly it was fashion and boyfriends. Neither of those was really the stuff of a good videogame. Then they started talking about food—about cakes and sweets and fruit—and it hit me that food and eating would be the thing to concentrate on to get the girls interested."

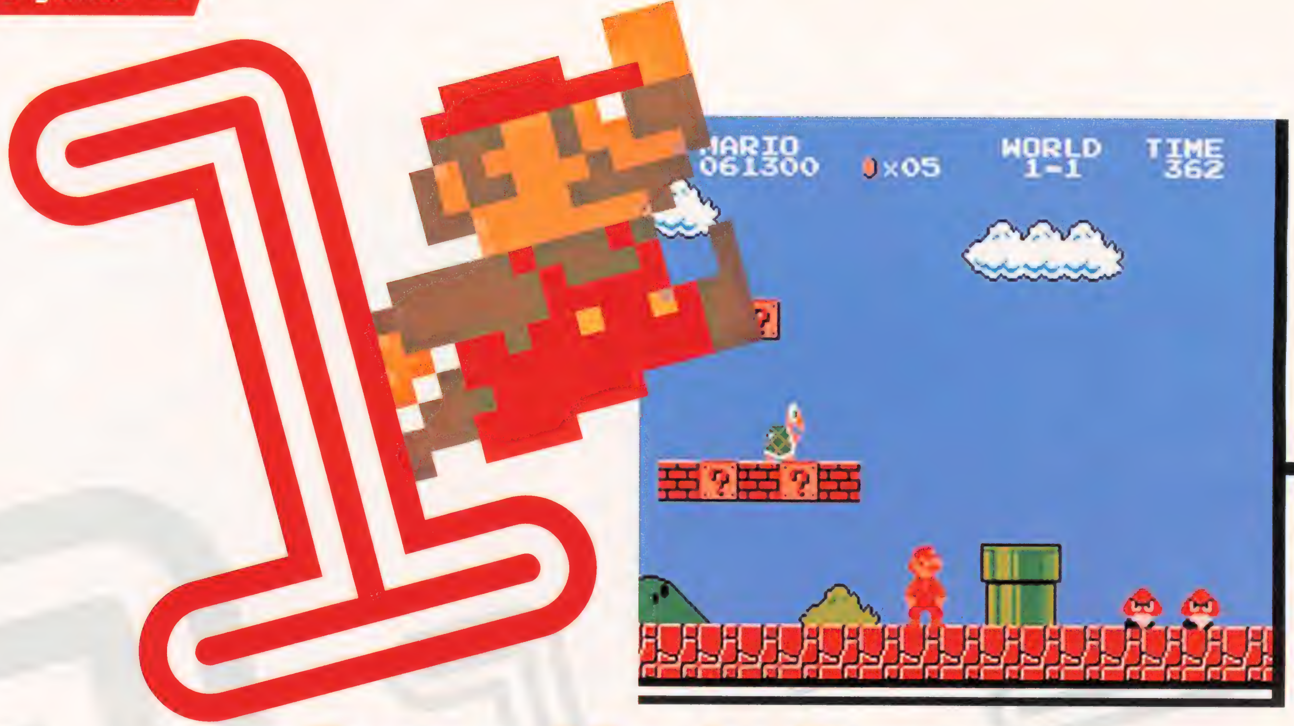
—*Toru Iwatani,* Pac-Man *creator, in an interview with* Times Online

"If I may be so bold as to compare *Pac-Man* to the Beatles' 'Yesterday'...in the same way that 'Yesterday' is the standard [for a good song] in the music industry, I also believe *Pac-Man* has become the standard in the game industry. For this reason, I believe *Pac-Man* will withstand the test of time and continue to be enjoyed by gamers in the years to come."

—*Toru Iwatani in an interview with* EGM

Over 10 Billion Served

Videogame record keepers Twin Galaxies believe *Pac-Man* has been played over 10 billion times in the 20th century, based on a study they did.



Super Mario Bros.

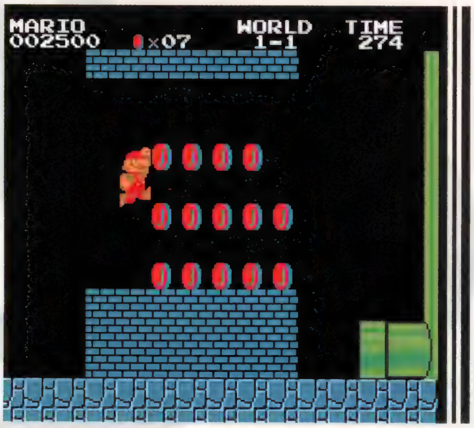
NES • 1985

Brick-breaking Nintendo mascot Mario was huge even before he broke out in this seminal side-scroller. Too huge, in fact. "So we shrank him," creator Shigeru Miyamoto said in a *BusinessWeek* interview about the creation of his game. "Then we thought, 'What if he can grow and shrink? How would he do that? It would have to be a magic mushroom!'"

But power-upping mushrooms—long since lasered into gaming iconology—were far from the only contributions of Miyamoto's masterpiece. *Super Mario Bros.* bred a generation of Nintendo fanboys-4-life with such gameplay innovations as screens that scrolled, twitchy dungeon traps, regiments of trooping turtles, secrets that players passed via word of mouth—all mortared brick by smashable brick into an experience so gripping that we were happy to learn the princess was in *another* castle.

Today, even Mario's boinging jump is enough to trigger Pavlovian thumb twitching. "I don't think there are many games that we can identify immediately by a simple sound effect," says *Resident Evil* creator Shinji Mikami. And more than a few of gaming's greatest designers might have been lost to us if not for Miyamoto's best-seller. "I encountered *Super Mario Bros.* back when I was a student," *Metal Gear* series maker Hideo Kojima tells us. "It really changed my life. If I had somehow missed playing this game, the Hideo Kojima I am now would not exist."

Not bad for a game Miyamoto dreamed up two decades ago while wondering "what it would be like to have a character that bounces around," he says. "Honestly speaking, 20 years ago, I could never dream that this game could lead up to such a beloved franchise all over the world." Funny, because today we can't imagine it any other way.



"Up until the game was released, gamers were really tied to the one-play-per-coin system at the arcades. Then along came *Super Mario Bros.*, a game that wasn't frustrating or tedious. Rather, I think it was one of the first to nail down the idea of permanence in games. Even simple actions like running and jumping have deep gameplay implications. And the more you play, the more you discover. It's simply impossible to grow tired of *Super Mario Bros.*"

—Metal Gear *series creator Hideo Kojima*

"I saw it at a cousin's house. I played it. Within moments, I knew I had to own it. It is the most amazing game of its time, no question." —*Editor-in-Chief Dan Hsu*

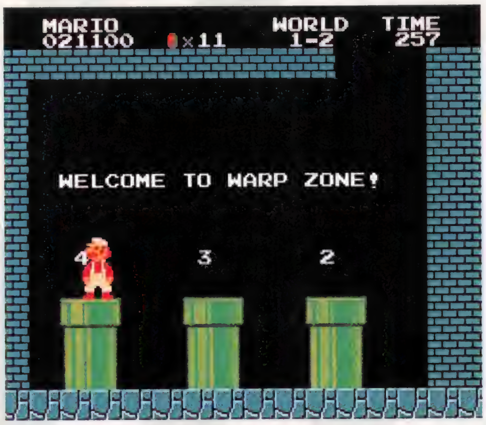
"*Super Mario Bros.* and pizza grease and rodents of unusual size will always be intertwined in my mind. I first played the game—in its coin-op form—at a Chuck E. Cheese arcade, where I was working my first job. One of my coworkers, who could spend his whole lunch break playing *Super Mario Bros.* on one quarter, showed me its many secrets my first day on the job. Two weeks later, I blew my first paycheck on an NES with a packed-in *Super Mario Bros.*"

—*Senior Editor Crispin Boyer*

"Before I ever played *Super Mario Bros.*, I remember my friend telling me all about the arcade game and it just didn't seem possible. He talked about shooting fireballs, secret tunnels, bullets you could bounce off of, hidden beanstalks leading into the clouds—all these amazing, crazy things that I just couldn't imagine all fitting into one game. At a time when you could sum up most games in 30 seconds, he went on and on like this for 30 *minutes*; I could tell he was getting excited to play it again just talking about it. When I finally saw the game, I was...I'm not sure how to put it. Awestruck, I guess. Not only was everything my friend said true, he had barely scratched the surface." —*Executive Editor Mark MacDonald*

"Whenever I tell people what I do for a living, the most common response is, '**Games have gotten too complicated for me, but I really loved that *Super Mario Bros.***' Everyone—young, old, boy, girl, gamer, non-gamer—has played Miyamoto's masterpiece and, more importantly, thoroughly enjoyed it. What kind of impact has the plumber's NES debut had on the public? Well, my girlfriend can't tell you what kind of game *Halo 2* is, but she still knows exactly where to find *Super Mario Bros.'* first warp zone."

—*News Editor Bryan Intihar*



"I still clearly remember church Sunday school the day after I got my NES back in 1986. Our teacher made each kid announce aloud something in their life that they thanked God for. Of course, I thanked God for *Super Mario Bros.* with the utmost sincerity. It was the game that redefined the concept of gameplay: If you stop and really evaluate what's going on with *Super Mario Bros.'* control—the precision jumping, the sense of inertia, the depth of mastery—it's mind-blowing." —*Previews Editor Shane Bettenhausen*

Think we missed a game? Says you. Head to egm.1up.com to submit your nominees, then check back online at the end of January when we'll run the Top 25 Games EGM Missed!

EGM EXTRAS EGM EXTRAS EGM EXTRAS EGM EXTRAS
GO TO
EGM.1UP.COM
FOR MORE

Super Mario's Odd World: Five bizarre facts about gaming's biggest star

1 Identity crisis

Nintendo swapped Mario, named after the company's Italian landlord, with a scrub called Stan the Bugman in the 1983 coin-op *Donkey Kong 3*. Mario returned in the next game. Stan is still missing.

2 Handy man

Mario has been billed as everything from a plumber to a doctor to a boxing ref to a demolition man throughout his gaming career. "I like to think of [the Mario brothers] as general contractors," says Kyle Orland of the fansite www.smbhq.com.

3 Poisoned power-ups

SUPER MARIO BROS. 2

With its Mario-killing mushrooms and warp zones that launched you back to earlier points in the game, the real sequel to *SMB* was deemed too tricky for American gamers, so instead Nintendo inserted new characters into a game called *Doki Doki Panic* and released it as *SMB2*.

4 Totally Glitchin'

Super Mario Bros. is filled with helpful bugs, including the ability to jump off walls years before that power was canonized in *Mario 64*. The most infamous glitch: The minus world. Google it to find out how to reach this mysterious negative land.

5 Casting miscall

Before he was played by stocky Brit actor Bob Hoskins in the horrible *Super Mario Bros.* film, Mario was played by the considerably stockier Capt. Lou Albano on the *Super Mario Bros. Super Show.*

review crew

a mixed bag of good and not so good, but fans of the genre will like it. try before you buy!

THIS MONTH IN REVIEWS...

Well, since we couldn't get our hands on *Project Gotham Racing 3* any sooner than you did, our Game of the Month winner is more like the Game of Two Months Ago, but what can you do? At least we had some strong contenders for Shame of the Month, what with *50 Cent* and *Crime Life* trying to out-thug each other.

Meanwhile, the Review Crew (right) fixed the flux capacitor, flipped the switch, and warped back to 1985...

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GAME OF THE MONTH

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 3

RETRO REVIEW CREW

Where we were in '89 for EGM #1...

DAN "SHOE" HSU • Editor-in-Chief
"Back in '89, I was sleeping through high school, making up in advance for all the sleep I'd lose later in life working on *EGM* deadlines."
Then Playing: Anything *Super Mario Bros.*!
Blog: egmshoe.1UP.com

MARK MACDONALD • Executive Editor
"Turning 16 in '89 meant I could finally drive—total freedom! Unfortunately, I pretty much just ended up at Babbages and the arcade."
Then Playing: *Tetris, Revenge of Shinobi, Mega Man II, Zelda II*
Blog: egmmark.1UP.com

JENNIFER TSAO • Managing Editor
"Luckily, I maxed out my social skills as a hipster teen before I had any clue that later in life my most exciting Friday night activity would be a *Baldur's Gate* LAN party...."
Then Playing: Cello, quarters
Blog: egmjennifer.1UP.com

CRISPIN BOYER • Senior Editor
"Picking between a Genesis or TurboGrafx-16 was tougher than choosing a college. So I got 'em both and went to Barbazon Mullet Academy."
Then Playing: *Ghouls 'n Ghosts, The Legendary Axe*
Blog: egmcrispin.1UP.com

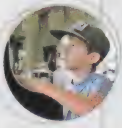
SHANE BETTENHAUSEN • Previews Editor
"Back in my middle-school days, I was a serious NES geek. Random kids would call me up in need of tips and guidance with games."
Then Playing: *Zelda II: The Adventure of Link, Phantasy Star*
Blog: egmshane.1UP.com

DEMIAN LINN • Reviews Editor
"My folks wouldn't let me have a NES because they felt those newfangled videogames caused brain rot. So I was stuck reading *D&D* books."
Then Playing: *Test Drive 2* (PC), *Super Mario Bros.* (at a friend's house), *Final Fight*
Blog: egmdemian.1UP.com

BRYAN INTIHAR • News Editor
"For me, 1989 was all about seeing *The Wizard* on the big screen. *Super Mario Bros. 3*, Jenny Lewis (a total hottie), the Power Glove—how could anyone not love this flick?"
Then Playing: *Tetris* (GB)
Blog: egmbryan.1UP.com

ROBERT ASHLEY • Staff Reviewer
"My dad took me to pool halls with him, gave me $10 worth of quarters, and sent me off to play *Frogger* and *Ms. Pac-Man* in the corner while he sharked the tables."
Then Playing: *Contra, The Legend of Zelda*
Blog: robertashley.1UP.com

JON DUDLAK • Staff Reviewer
"As a quiet, troubled, 10-year-old *Double Dragon* savant, I headed west with my bro to take on top gamers in *Super Mario Bros. 3*. It was actually a pretty crappy trip."
Then Playing: Everything with a Power Glove
Blog: egm_jonathan.1UP.com



GREG FORD • Staff Reviewer
"Until I got a NES, I'd go to my friends' to get my *Super Mario Bros.* fix...then I'd go home and draw my own levels. Man, the geekery sure started early."
Then Playing: *Contra, Castlevania II, Mega Man II*
Blog: egm_ford.1UP.com

CHRISTIAN NUTT • Staff Reviewer
"I still can't believe I conned a teacher into letting a friend and me design a new *Mega Man* game as a project in my foreign language class."
Then Playing: *Zelda II, Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders* (C64)
Blog: ferricide.1UP.com

NEED HELP
PLEASE
POLIC

KATHLEEN SANDERS • Staff Reviewer
"For this awkward, nerdy, 10-year-old girl, the moment at the end of *Metroid* when Samus took HER helmet off was so totally awesome. It made me fall absolutely in love with videogames."
Then Playing: *Metroid*
Blog: cookiecups.1UP.com

GREG SEWART • Staff Reviewer
"Buying my NES involved a bet, a trip to the mall through a blizzard, and climbing through the passenger-side window of an Olds Delta 88."
Then Playing: *Super Mario Bros., Duck Hunt, Castlevania II*
Blog: stewy.1UP.com

JUSTIN SPEER • Staff Reviewer
"One of the first games I bought for NES was *Airwolf*...too bad I didn't read the *EGM* review first (four out of 10 across the board)."
Then Playing: *Contra, Xenophobe, Super Mario Bros. 2, Zelda II*
Blog: zepyulos.1UP.com

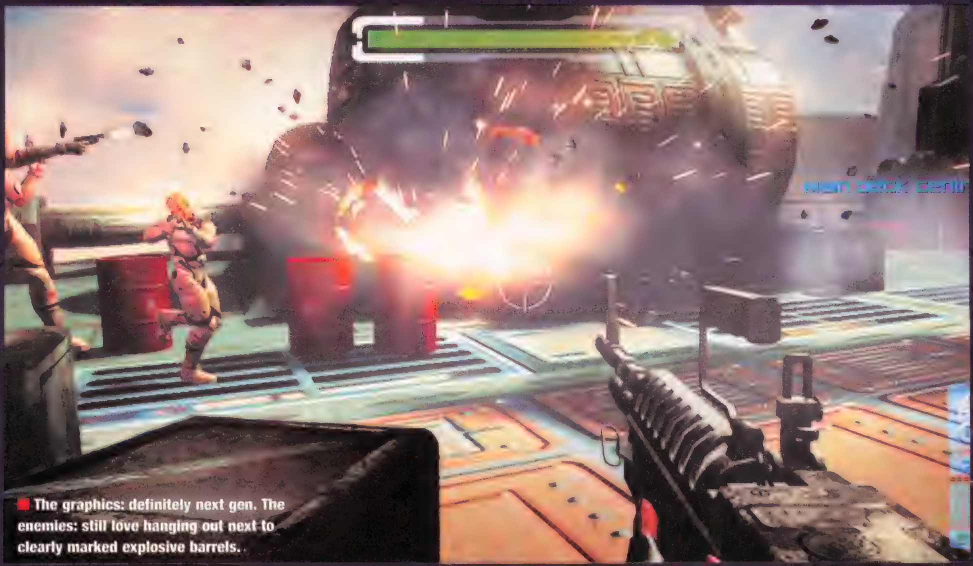
■ **OFFICIAL U.S. PLAYSTATION MAGAZINE** and **1UP.COM** are not nearly so finely aged as *EGM*, but those whippersnappers are always ready to share the reviews load.

THE RATING SYSTEM & AWARDS

10-7	6.5-5	4.5-0
GOOD	FAIR	BAD

Platinum	Gold	Silver	GAME OF THE MONTH	SHAME OF THE MONTH
Straight 10s. For games that are life-changing.	For games with an average score of 9.0 or higher.	For games with a mean score of 8.0 or higher.	The highest-scoring game each month gets a star.	The lowest-rated game with unanimously bad scores.

ESRB Ratings The ESRB's game ratings range from "Everyone" to "Adults Only." Visit **www.esrb.org** for the full lowdown.



The graphics: definitely next gen. The enemies: still love hanging out next to clearly marked explosive barrels.

Xbox 360

PERFECT DARK ZERO

ONLINE

Offline: bad, online: rad

SHOE: I'm not sure what upsets me more: the horrendous mess that is *Perfect Dark Zero*'s single-player game or all the glowing reviews out there (including Che's). Are these crazies playing the same game as me?

This first-person shooter sticks to its "futuristic James Bond" roots, so I didn't mind stuff like the cornball villains and dialogue. I did, however, mind the level design. Now, I can appreciate nonlinear gameplay. But through a lot of the game, I was screaming, "What the f*** am I supposed to be doing now?!?" and wandering about aimlessly in areas that I wasn't meant to go into at that time. But the game *knows* you may get lost, so after a while, your HQ "plots a course" for you, meaning it draws a big trail on the ground pointing you to where you're long overdue. That, my friends, is a quick-fix bandage for piss-poor level design.

Multiplayer, however, is a whole different story. In the competitive modes, you get lots of customization options, a crapload of guns (*PDZ*'s best feature), and computer-controlled bots to fill in the blanks for when you don't have enough human bodies. After I put in my numerous review-time hours, though, I really didn't feel the urge to go back and play more, unlike the next two freaks whose reviews you're about to read.

G. FORD: While Shoe is absolutely right in his criticisms of *PDZ*'s single-player mess, he doesn't give enough credit to what *PDZ* does so well: multiplayer. And you'd better believe that a game launching with such an online-driven system will live and die by its online features. Co-op play makes the story mode bearable, even fun, despite its brain-melting craptitude. It's the online combat arena that proves most joyous, though. The typical deathmatch and capture-the-flag games do their jobs admirably, and the myriad Dark Ops modes impress even more, (mostly) giving you one life and one objective to work with. The resulting tense firefights and simple strategies are the stuff of multiplayer dreams. While it's no *Halo*, *PDZ* is the one launch game I see myself playing well into 2006.

1UP.COM—CHE: Although I can't really defend *PDZ*'s single-player campaign against Shoe's laundry list of complaints, I do think the game merits my score with its excellent suite of online co-op and multiplayer modes. I especially love how Rare managed to capture the feeling of what it was like to play *GoldenEye* (N64) with your buddies huddled around a TV, except now, you're eschewing splitscreen shenanigans for true multiplayer over Xbox Live. On top of an awesome set of weapons and solid, intuitive controls, *PDZ* throws in a variety of multiplayer elements, such as bots, vehicles, and gameplay modes, to keep things fresh. Finally, the online killer app comes in the form of *PDZ*'s Dark Ops mode, which is high-stakes, tactical, and very addictive. Only more multiplayer maps could have topped off what's already an excellent online experience.

Four funny facets we frequently found flaying *Ferpect Fark Fero*....

Phreaky Physics
If you're (un)lucky, you might see an enemy corpse pinballing around a room like a super-bouncy ball. Also, try shooting vases and bottles for some strange chain reactions.

Walk, Don't Run
Everything feels really sluggish and slow (especially while melee attacking), but you can tuck those guns for more speed. We wish you could always run that fast, though.

Dum, Da Dum Dum
On later stages, the computer-controlled enemies have some annoying superhuman aim and perception. But they'll still do stupid crap like stare at walls or run into turret fire.

Riiiiiiiiii-cola!
Badbadbad voicevoicevoice chatchatchat echoesechoesechoes maymaymay dampendampendampen thethethe onlineonlineonline funfunfun (see page 23 for help on this).

Good: Online multiplayer (co-op and deathmatch) and tons of guns!
Bad: Crappy single-player design
What Happened To: The "Kill TV" spectator mode?

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

SHOE	G. FORD	CHE
6.5	8.0	9.0

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Rare
Players: 1-4 (2 online co-op, 2-32 online versus)
ESRB: Mature

www.perfectdarkzero.com

OK TO PLAY?

CHECK THE RATINGS ON EVERY VIDEO GAME BOX

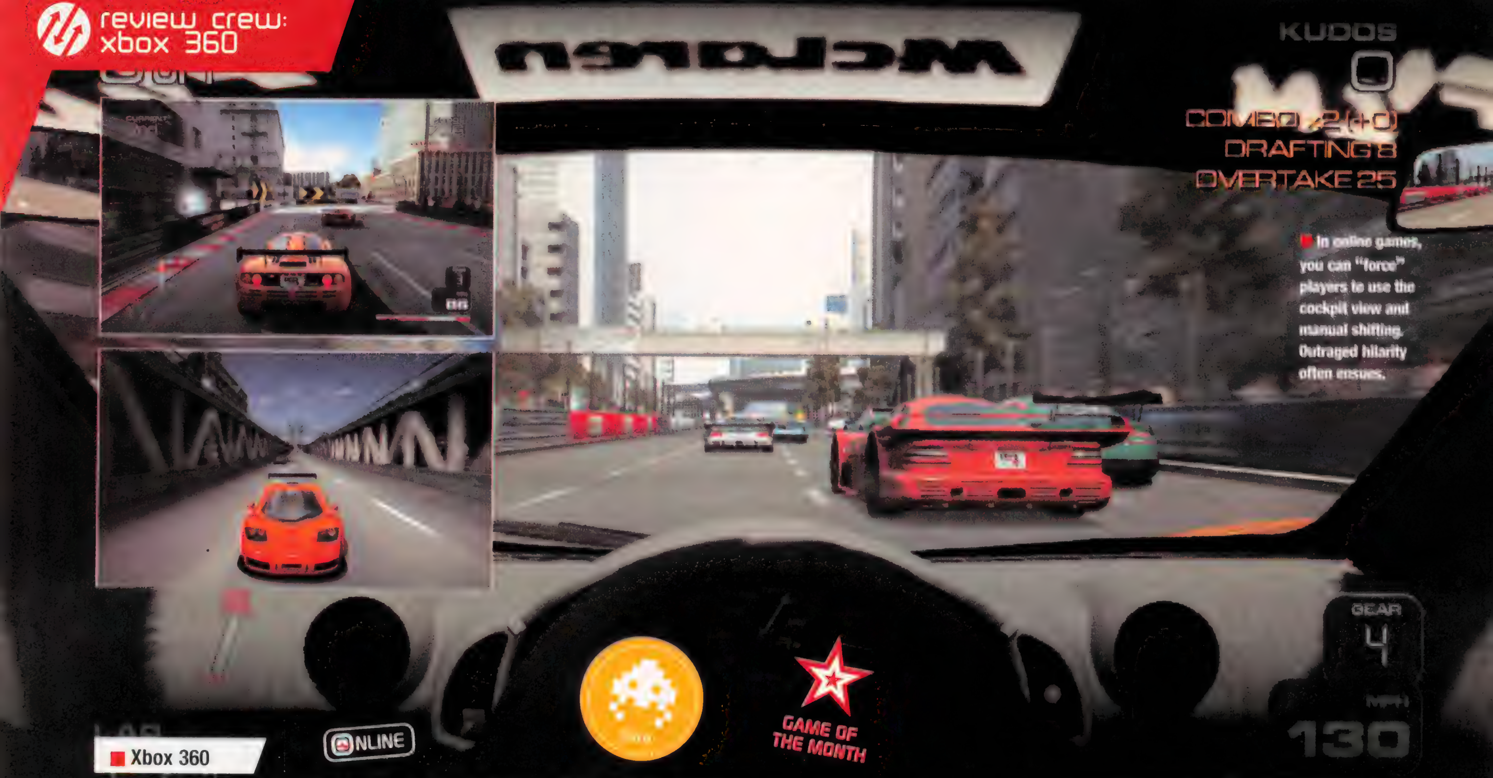
ON FRONT

EARLY CHILDHOOD
eC
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
EVERYONE 10+
E 10+
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
ADULTS ONLY 18+
AO
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
VIDEO GAME
E

ON BACK

EVERYONE 10+
E 10+
Cartoon Violence
Mild Lyrics
ESRB CONTENT RATING www.esrb.org

ESRB
Entertainment Software
Rating Board
WWW.ESRB.ORG



In online games, you can "force" players to use the cockpit view and manual shifting. Outraged hilarity often ensues.

Xbox 360

ONLINE

GAME OF THE MONTH

PROJECT GOTHAM RACING 3

Kudos to you, sir

DEMIAN: Now that's some goooood lookin' driving game right there. For me, *Project Gotham Racing 3* is the best of 360's launch titles; it grafts the series' appealing mix of sorta realistic (much more so than *Ridge Racer*) but still forgiving (much more so than *Forza*) handling to some of the most impressive graphics I've ever seen on a console.

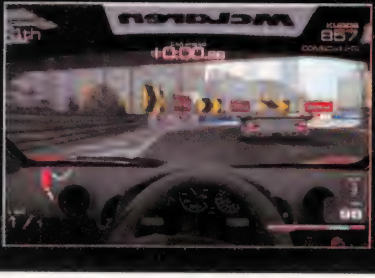
If you're not playing in cockpit view, you're cheating yourself. I don't care if the dash eats up valuable visual real estate—little details like the flickering sunlight on the instrument panel and smudges on the windshield (only visible when the light hits it just right) really convey that behind-the-wheel feel. It's incredibly intense, and all the usual clichés about white knuckles and forgetting to blink apply times 10.

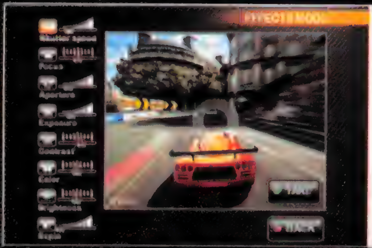
PGR's signature "kudos" system is back, so you'll earn kudo points for powerslides and overtaking maneuvers—but, strangely, you now also earn credits for doing well in races, and those are what you use to buy new cars. So piling up the kudos is pretty much worthless, except to climb the Xbox Live leaderboards. Weird.

Don't expect that street-tuning malarky (sorry, dub fans) or free-roaming cities here. And while those things certainly don't make a racing game great, *PGR3* could use a little more variety. The offline single player begins to feel like a treadmill of repetitive race events (though you can also earn credits through online races). Still, *PGR3* is so damn pretty, I can't be mad at it for long.

SHANE: Perched comfortably between the fanciful arcade insanity of *Ridge Racer* and the meticulous gearhead simulation of *Gran Turismo*, *PGR3* delivers uniquely semiserious racing thrills. Here, you don't have to stress over automotive minutia (the only tweaking you'll do is to your paint job), and you can recklessly powerslide around corners in luxury cars like a spoiled rich kid. *PGR3* offers instant gratification: From the outset you're getting behind the wheels of some wickedly powerful sports cars. And you'll actually want to improve your skills, thanks to the series' trademark kudos system—garnering instant feedback (and unlockable achievements) adds plenty of incentive to keep on truckin'. Still, don't expect a wildly inventive racer—the overall scope of the game hasn't really expanded much from *PGR2*, but the lovely photo-realistic visuals and deep online play make it a worthwhile investment.

1UP.COM—CHE: *PGR3* is pretty much everything I've been looking for in a racing game but somehow didn't even know I wanted until I strapped into its gorgeous interior. It combines the gripping, edge-of-your-seat rush and ease of an exotic arcade racer with the depth and vehicular distinction of more sophisticated driving sims. The balance between the two gameplay styles is nearly perfect. Unlike *PGR2*, which upped the ante in terms of total and seamless online integration, *PGR3*'s great contribution to the genre is in the incredible in-car view that establishes not only an intense sense of speed, but also a sense of weight not found in even the most complex sim racing games. And you're never stuck driving a mundane Peugeot hatchback. There isn't another racer I'd rather play...well, at least until *Forza* hits Xbox 360.





Spectator Sports

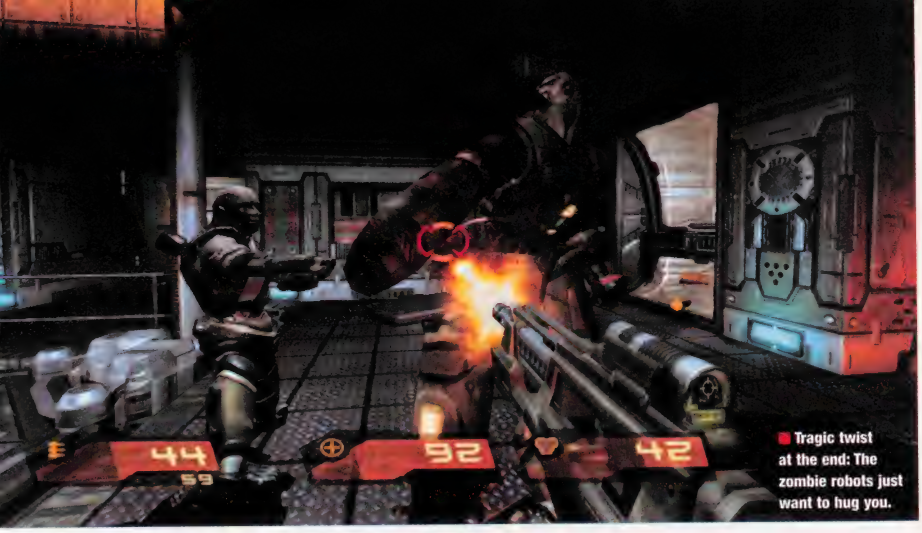
Project Gotham Racing 3 borrows *Gran Turismo 4*'s photo mode, then makes it better—you can pause race replays and then pose a pretty snapshot anywhere on the track. But for the truly lazy, fire up Gotham TV on Xbox Live and watch the top-ranked players battle it out on the Heroes channel. Or hit the Friends channel and see your buddies ping-pong off the track walls and lose horribly.

Good: The McLaren F1. Cockpit view. Oh yes
Bad: Kudos. What are they good for now?
Some Company, Please: Make a force-feedback 360 wheel!

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	DEMIAN	SHANE	CHE
	9.0	8.5	9.5

Publisher: Microsoft
Developer: Bizarre Creations
Players: 1-2 (2-8 online or system link)
ESRB: Everyone 10+

www.xbox.com



Tragic twist at the end: The zombie robots just want to hug you.

Xbox 360 ONLINE

QUAKE 4

Anyone could have predicted this Quake

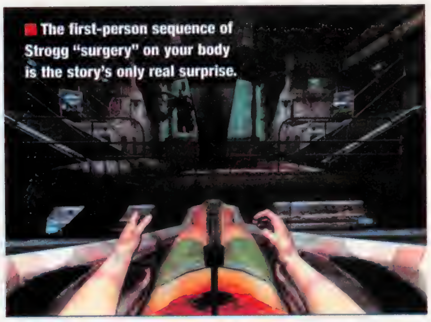
Good: Fast online deathmatch, solid gameplay
Bad: Same story, enemies, and levels you've seen before
Don't Look Down: Where are your legs?

MARK: Besides the visual choppiness whenever you turn, it's hard to isolate specific problems with *Quake 4*—because there aren't any. The controls are solid; the enemy A.I. is fine; the gameplay is varied and competent. But maybe words like "solid," "competent," and "fine" tell you why it's also hard to recommend *Quake 4*: It's exactly what you've come to expect from a modern first-person shooter, and nothing else.

A space marine blasting his way through a military base full of half-man half-machines is not the most exciting setting for a first-person shooter anymore; a short sequence where you're captured and transformed into the enemy is the only time *Quake 4* even attempts to tweak the formula. It doesn't help that so much of the game, including all the enemies and most environments, looks straight out of *Doom 3*, right down to the ever-present, giant Rube Goldberg machines pumping away at god knows what in the backgrounds. Likewise, multiplayer is basically *Quake III* warmed over with new levels: still a great, arcadey deathmatch experience, but nothing new. Even single-player's limited squad combat bits and vehicle sections feel by the numbers. *Quake 4* is far from terrible, but this series deserves better.

KATHLEEN: All the FPS clichés are here: You've got your sewer level, you can't climb anything without a ladder, the most direct route is always blocked (but you'll find another way around involving a vent or a hole torn in a wall by an explosion, but one that you couldn't make with the rocket cannon in your back pocket), and you know when you're about to face a big baddie by the scads of health packs and ordnance lying around. Enjoy all of this while suppressing both frustration and epileptic fits due to the unforgivable slowdown problems. The multiplayer is totally decent (and lacks the graphical glitches, strangely), but $60 is steep for a game that I feel like I've played before.

1UP.COM—CHE: If you only play *Quake 4* single-player you might be underwhelmed, particularly if you're expecting the A.I. from *Halo* and/or truly epic outdoor battles with alien forces. But if you can stomach the mediocre art direction, repetitive sci-fi environments, and occasional choppiness in the action, you'll find a fun solo campaign with a decent amount of gameplay. *Quake 4*'s main attraction, of course, is its mad-dash multiplayer deathmatch, which to this day remains the fastest, most intuitive, and most skillful game around. So if you're not into the slower-paced *Perfect Dark Zero*, pick this up to satisfy your 360 twitch-shooter needs.



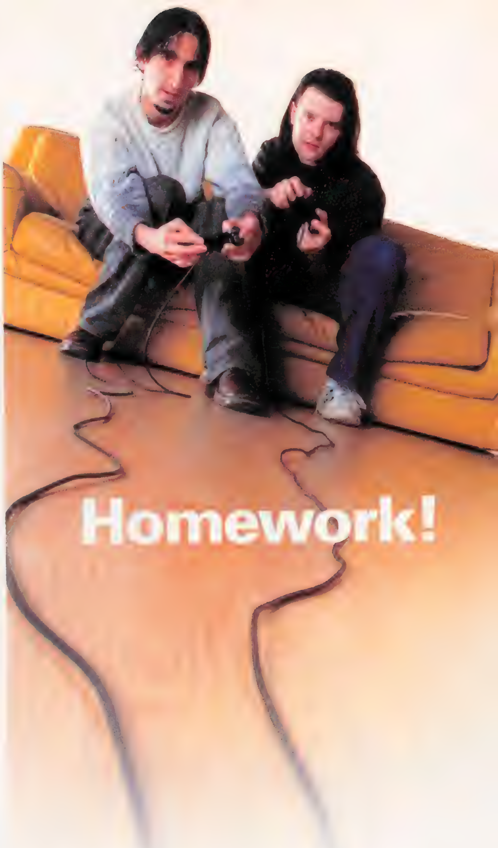
The first-person sequence of Strogg "surgery" on your body is the story's only real surprise.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

MARK	KATHLEEN	CHE
5.5	5.5	8.0

Publisher: Activision
Developer: Raven
Players: 1 (2-8 online or system link)
ESRB: Mature

www.activision.com



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■ **Strong, violent types:** *Two Thrones* **boss roster starts out fierce (with this big guy), then kinda peters out.**

■ PS2/XB/GC

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE TWO THRONES

The return of the king

G. FORD: For many fans, the simple fact that the "rockin'" guitar riffs from last year's *Warrior Within* are gone is reason enough to consider *The Two Thrones* a superior game—but that's just the start of a long list of substantial refinements and additions. *Thrones* brings the current-gen *Prince of Persia* trilogy to a close beautifully, once again sending the titular hero through a puzzle-heavy, time-fiddling action-adventure.

This story starts when the Prince returns home to a war-torn Babylon, where his quest for revenge becomes a mission of self-discovery. Amusing inner dialogue highlights a struggle with his devil-on-the-shoulder alter ego, which manifests as uncontrollable transformations into the hyperviolent Dark Prince. *Warrior Within*'s angsty, badass Prince becomes much more endearing as he gradually figures out his true reasons for fighting.

In fact, developer Ubisoft Montreal has addressed seemingly every misstep of last year's mostly grand adventure—too much backtracking, hit-or-miss boss battles—making *Thrones* the series' best-paced, least-frustrating entry (marred by only a few tedious puzzles). Getting through the constantly fresh environments requires some new techniques—including the ability to stab certain wall tiles, which greatly expands your cliff-scaling options—and combat gets a boost from the satisfying speed kills, which have you sneaking up on enemies and then hitting the attack button at designated instances during cinematic slayings (see sidebar). All these additions make for a near-perfect adventure; topped only by *God of War*, *Thrones* stands as one of 2005's best.

JENNIFER: I'm with Greg and Crispin on *Two Thrones*' environments and storytelling—they're among the best in gaming. That last vertiginous level was awe-inspiring; I really felt like I'd scaled the Tower of Babel, one death-defying leap at a time. But I simply can't agree that this is an altogether triumphant end to the trilogy. Shouldn't they have figured out by now exactly where the saves and continues go? Yet *Thrones* features a tricky platforming sequence followed by a chariot race followed by a demanding boss battle without a single save point. I've lost count of how many times I replayed treacherous, trap-laden passages because I missed one stupid button press at the end—especially with the Dark Prince. He's got a great personality, but his gameplay sucks. Having to worry about his continuously depleting health often transformed what I like most about this series—the intellectually stimulating platforming—into a tedious exercise in timed button presses.

CRISPIN: *Two Thrones*' returning first-game characters, sillier sensibilities, and trippy self-deprecating finale are like personal apologies from the developers for the last game's goth-kid growing pains. This sequel makes it fun to be the Prince again. It unspools cunningly designed levels that keep him on the move—and you in the wall-running, platform-leaping zone—even though the novelty of his greatest-of-ease acrobatics has worn off (more new moves, please). The game still makes missteps; it forgets about checkpoints during some tricky trap areas, the new one-button attacks become hard to pull off when the camera goes haywire, and the annoying final boss battle is as fun as leaping around a giant toilet bowl in a snowstorm. Otherwise, it's nice to see a return of elegance to the series.

What's the diff? The Xbox and PS2 versions of *Two Thrones* are virtually identical, even more so than the last game (especially since the Xbox Live features are gone). We hadn't received the GameCube disc by press time, so check the review at 1UP.com for an update on that version.

Sharp Minds

More of a thinker than a fighter? *Two Thrones* does away with the constant combat of the last game and intermingles puzzles into the battles. You'll encounter roomfuls of enemies you can clear out with the new timed-button stealth kills—but only if you figure out how to reach the first bad guy in the sequence, which often involves a climbing puzzle. Failure means facing the startled guards' reinforcements. Of course, if combat is your thing, you can just blunder on in with your blades, you brute.

Good: Sublime mix of adventure, combat, and storytelling
Bad: Some tedious puzzles, the Dark Prince's depleting health
Chariot Racing: Simple but fun bonus-game-type sequences

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

G. FORD	JENNIFER	CRISPIN
9.5	7.0	9.0

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Ubisoft Montreal
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

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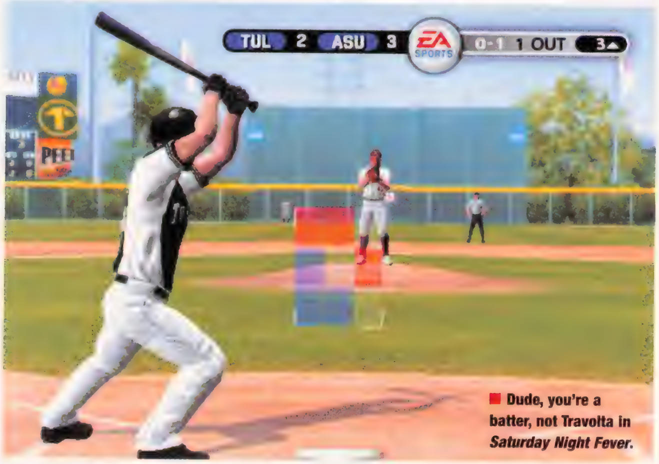
* C O A C 3 9 B 0 *

PS2/XB

MVP 06 NCAA BASEBALL

ONLINE

America's pastime pulls a Bill Buckner



Dude, you're a batter, not Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever*.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

BRYAN	G. FORD	MILKMAN
5.5	8.0	6.5

Publisher: EA Sports
Developer: EA Canada
Players: PS2 1-2
(2-4 via Multitap or online),
XB 1-4 (2-4 online)
ESRB: Everyone
www.easports.com

Good: Right analog stick batting and throwing, the concept
Bad: Right analog stick batting and throwing, the execution
When Online: You'll get ESPN Radio *SportsCenter* updates

BRYAN: Poor *MVP*. Publisher 2K Sports and the console manufacturers now have exclusive rights to the MLB license, so EA's *MVP* series has been booted from the bigs (turnabout is fair play—EA snatched up the NFL license first). With the forced change from the pros' wooden bats to college's metal whoppin' sticks, *MVP* has also lost its rep as one of the best baseball franchises.

Now don't misunderstand, *06* sports two very welcomed innovations: right analog stick batting and throwing. But the problem here—and it's a biggie—is the execution of these new mechanics. Using the stick to chuck the ball around the diamond feels quite natural, yet the throwing meter doesn't react fast enough when turning double plays, and even perfect tosses force the first baseman off the bag too often. At the plate, the new system makes it easier to check-swing, but you'll rarely connect for an extra-base hit or home run. Luckily, you can always go back to last year's playing style, but even then, the game has rough spots: Infielders miss routine pop-ups, and the announcers continuously repeat themselves. G. Ford may turn a cheek to these problems, but I feel like *MVP 06* was rushed to get out in front of the big-leaguers.

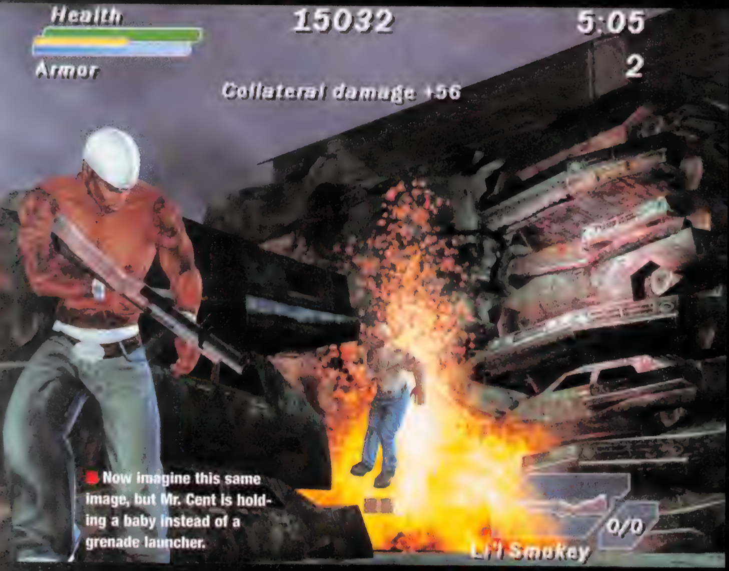
G. FORD: Bryan's being too harsh on these kids. It's not easy to nab baseballs rocketing off of metal bats—even major leaguers don't face that. Seriously, though, yeah, *MVP 06*'s fielding system drops the ball, literally. Sure, I got used to the analog stick fielding/throwing, but it always felt cumbersome. Most everything else is great, though. The analog swing system takes only a few innings to master and feels very intuitive, while the dynasty mode keeps you busy as you navigate play-off trees and spend time recruiting. Provided you can live with the ping of metal bats and lack of MLB stars (which definitely stings), *MVP 06* is a great hardball sim.

1UP.COM—MILKMAN: Remember the days when games like *World Series Baseball* for the Saturn provided deep, exciting gameplay with simple, intuitive controls? No? Well, I do, and while the spirit lives on in the *MLB 2K* series, it doesn't in *MVP 06*. This baseballer does a good job of simulating the minor-league quality of college ball (read: errors seem more realistic and common), but the overly convoluted functionality of the game kills it for me. Swinging the bat with the analog stick isn't as timely or precise as pressing a button, and when you factor in trigger pulls and other diversions, it becomes less a joy and more a chore to try to get a batter on base.

PS2/XB

50 CENT: BULLETPROOF

Please don't kill us



Now imagine this same image, but Mr. Cent is holding a baby instead of a grenade launcher.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

ROBERT	GREG S.	JON D.
3.5	3.0	3.5

Publisher: VU Games
Developer: Genuine
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.50centbulletproof.com

Good: Cut-scene direction, voice acting, unlockable music and videos
Bad: Shooting, moving, jumping...
Hilarious: Watching Tony Yayo blow himself up in an A.I. stupor

ROBERT: How much street cred can nine bullet wounds buy? This is the question 50 Cent's career seeks to answer. Can you have your own flavor of pink mineral water and still call yourself a "gangsta"? Apparently. Can you star in a game in which you gruesomely stab people, steal their wallets, and then use their money to buy an assortment of promo merchandise? You bet.

Bulletproof, a third-person shooter in the vein of *Dead to Rights* or *Max Payne*, was part of 2005's 50 Cent holiday marketing assault, and like all advertising it favors image over substance. The cut-scenes are top-notch, with dark, druggy art direction and great voice acting from 50, Eminem, and Dr. Dre. But as a game, *Bulletproof* is a disaster. Your G-Unit allies are so dumb they had to be made invincible to keep them alive. Your enemies, on the other hand, sense your presence from 100 yards away and run in erratic patterns as they spray bullets, a frustration compounded by sloppy aiming controls. *Bulletproof* is a blur of lazy design, pandering gore, and shameless product placement.

GREG S: Fiddy's game is barely worth the two quarters that his name comprises. Once you get past the fantastic character models and the mountains of licensed music found within (though the same four tracks play over and over again during the game), you have nothing but problems. The targeting system is useless, the levels are bland and filled with countless invisible barriers, and the camera is so hard to manipulate in tight spaces that you'll often end up staring right at 50's face as he gets ventilated by the dozen enemies he just can't see. I wouldn't even recommend this to hardcore 50 Cent fans. If you really need your gangsta fix, go replay *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* instead.

JON D: Like every star-studded, franchised-to-hell game that plops on the PS2, *Bulletproof* looks like a million bucks and plays like, well, 50 cents. Trying to line up a target's head (hit 'im anywhere else and it'll take most of your magazine to drop him) with your pinhole of a reticule while running, diving, and dodging incoming fire is ridiculously cumbersome. And whether you're wielding a 9 milli or a 12-gauge, half the guns in the game have the same peashooter impact on enemy thugs when you are lucky enough to connect. The combat gimmicks—graphic, grappling insta-kills—look great but do zilch for gameplay since they're autotriggered with a single button press. Maybe 50 should have approached Rockstar about getting dropped into the next *GTA* instead.

Gandalf was always such a show-off.

PS2/XB

ONLINE (PS2/XB)

GAUNTLET: SEVEN SORROWS

More sorrows than hours

Good: Another solid, if mindless, round of elf clear-cutting
Bad: Too short for such a simple game
Nonsense: Cheese is worth more health than a turkey leg?

ROBERT: Sometimes you just want to lean back in your chair, slice through a few hundred cliché fantasy-novel monsters, and let your mind wander. Luckily for you, *Gauntlet*—the grandpappy of evil-horde-clearing hack-n-slash—is happy to oblige.

Not much has changed since the old days. You still make your way through levels, looting treasure chests and dropping undead soldiers by the dozen. You still hunt down and destroy "generators," the odd little shanties that spit out said creatures. It's a simple formula, but one that still has the power to hold me in a mesmerized stupor, emphasis on stupor.

Sure, a modern twist shows up here and there. *Seven Sorrows* baits you with a role-playing-game-style character development system, but the game's short length (easily clocking in under six hours) makes leveling up unrewarding. The attacks held back as "unlockable" are essential to enjoying the game's bone-thin combat. And for a game named after its bosses (the "Seven Sorrows"), the boss fights sure are uninspired. We also noticed major lag issues online—hopefully Midway will work out the kinks.

G. FORD: I'm surprised I had so much fun with such a derivative game. No, *Seven Sorrows*' story isn't anything special, nor are its graphics all that impressive. The action-RPG and puzzle elements reek of simplicity. Hacking and slashing, though responsive, take on a familiar tune (sure, you can make use of the purchasable combos, but banging on one button works just as well). And yet I found slogging through generic levels and destroying monster generators enjoyable, even soothing. Add in the multiplayer, which is practically a necessity against some bosses (and a pain with everyone confined to one screen), and you'll find it tough not to have some familiar, if fleeting, fun.

MARK: In so many ways, *Sorrows* barely scrapes by: The pathetic story is little more than a voice over still pictures (leftover storyboards, perhaps?), the levels are predictable switch-flippers, and the plain graphics and muted effects are shrug-worthy. But against all this mediocrity, the engaging combat system (ranged attacks, special moves, melee combos) stands out; it's great for button mashers and finesse players alike, even if the enemies rarely require any variation in tactics. And like all *Gauntlet* games, *Sorrows*' short-lived fun multiplies with the number of players. It doesn't encourage cooperation in any interesting way, and lag screws up the game online, but with friends on the same console it periodically reminds you why this was once a great franchise.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

ROBERT	G. FORD	MARK
6.5	6.5	6.0

Publisher: Midway
Developer: Midway
Players: PS2 1-2 (2-4 w/Multitap, 2-4 online), XB 1-4 (2-4 online)
ESRB: Teen

www.gauntletsevensorrows.com

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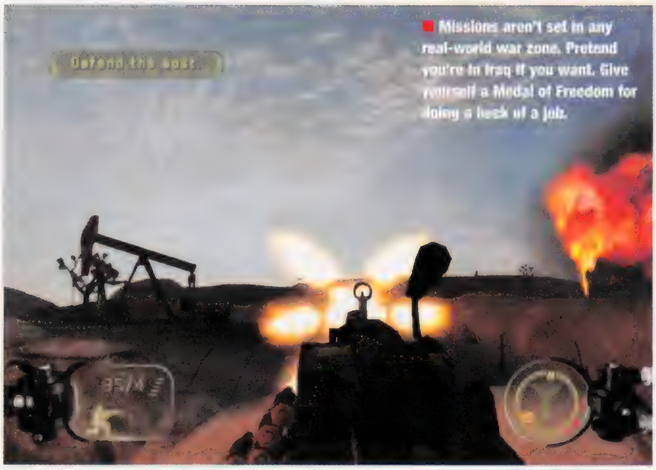
PS2/XB

ONLINE (PS2/XB)

AMERICA'S ARMY: RISE OF A SOLDIER

Dodge the draft



Missions aren't set in any real-world war zone. Pretend you're in Iraq if you want. Give yourself a Medal of Freedom for doing a heck of a job.

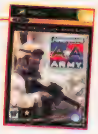
THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

CRISPIN	SHOE	KATHLEEN
6.0	6.5	5.0

Publisher: Ubisoft
Developer: Secret Level
Players: 1 (2-16 online)
ESRB: Teen

www.riseofasoldier.com

Good: Specialized trooper types, skill-building system
Bad: Canned missions, robotic A.I.
We Couldn't Try: The supposedly identical PS2 version



CRISPIN: In the first-person-shooter arms race, *America's Army* coulda been the new superpower. Check its arsenal: You get a novel character-building system that lets you divvy up experience points among seven skills (including stealth and reflex-boosting honor). You choose between seven different roles, from a just-out-of-boot-camp rifleman to a night-stalking special-forces badass. And the game is Uncle Sam approved: Real soldiers served as advisors, which explains the authentic radio chatter and realistic take on everything from aiming to squad tactics.

So it's too bad that the missions themselves suffer major malfunctions. Despite their frantic firefights, they're completely canned, with enemies—and even your allies—going through the same motions every time. And the lack of enough checkpoints means you'll replay these battles so many times, you'll see 'em in your sleep. You'll also need to redo missions just to get experience points (be sure to build your honor skill, or you'll shoot worse than a stormtrooper). Online battles, of course, are much less predictable and definitely more fun—at least once you build your skills to where you can wield the better weapons.

SHOE: Playing army man reminds me of my days with the *Rainbow Six* and *Ghost Recon* squads: lots of pinpoint shooting of enemies (aka folks that don't speak *American*) from as far away as possible. It's not flashy—goofy animations and drab graphics take a lot of gung-ho out of this fight. But building up your character's skills and the variety of soldier classes make this a shooter/role-playing-game hybrid that's beefy and rather replayable. It can get impossibly difficult at times, though.

I noticed the Xbox Live competition was very friendly, too—a big difference from the jerks playing *Halo 2*. Perhaps military games draw more Southern hospitality?

KATHLEEN: This is not just an adventure; it's also an Army recruitment tool. *America's Army* offers a cool, RPG-ish character customization element, but then you'd better put a cork in any independent thought to survive the mind-numbingly linear campaign mode. Both friends and your brown-skinned foes (brown because of muddy, murky graphics...or racial profiling?) are crushingly stupid.

On the upside, the online multiplayer's wide and elaborate game types and maps help offer some redemption. And as Shoe said, most players were refreshingly supportive nonasshats—just like real Army gentlemen.

PS2

APE ESCAPE 3

Not everybody loves monkeys

The *Metal Gear* minigame ain't so mini—it's five levels long.

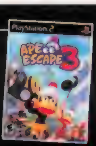
THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

JUSTIN	G. FORD	KATHLEEN
8.0	5.0	5.5

Publisher: Sony CEA
Developer: Sony CEI
Players: 1
ESRB: Everyone

www.playstation.com

Good: Inventive and enjoyable monkey-netting action
Bad: Camera and controls wonk out from time to time
Warning: Some monkeys not wearing pants



JUSTIN: I admit I was happy to hear that the monkeys from *Ape Escape* were running loose and causing mischief once again. Not because I'm a simian sympathizer, but because the series always makes catching the little guys so damn fun.

As usual, you'll use both analog sticks in clever ways to net your monkey quota via lightweight puzzling and hop-and-bop action. Power-up costumes like Wild West Kid and Miracle Ninja might have cynical gamers rolling their eyes, but while each getup is required at certain moments, the game constantly inspires you to switch to your favorite costumes for the fun of it, with wacky scenarios that parody films like *Friday the 13th*, *Titanic*, and even Bruce Lee's *Game of Death*. Monkey gangsters playing mah-jongg in the back of a Chinese restaurant? Bust out the Dragon Kung Fu outfit and it's on. The game is short but packs tons of mostly ripe optional stuff to keep you amused. Minor control or camera issues may bite you in the butt now and then, but you just can't help but have fun with this one. Unless your name is G. Ford or Kathleen.

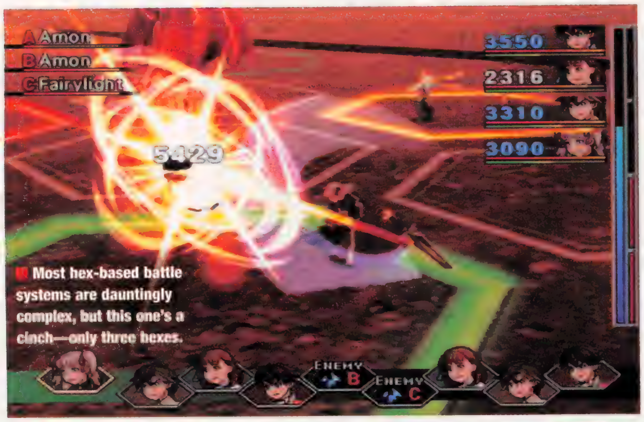
G. FORD: Remember when *Ape Escape* was the poster child of innovation, an amusing platformer that showed off the wonders of Sony's DualShock controller? Well, using the right stick to attack doesn't wow me so much anymore—I'd rather have a functional camera. *Ape Escape 3* finds itself in a world of hurt when it comes to keeping the action onscreen, but even if the camera were ideal, the game is far too uninspired and short (though generally competent) to keep its target younger demographic amused—get 'em Sony's superior *Sly 3* instead, I say. Even the game's potentially amusing Mesal Gear Solid minigame (an unlockable *Metal Gear Solid* riff) is chock-full of camera-bred frustration.

KATHLEEN: I understand the compulsion to trap hordes of furry creatures to populate a private zoo. When the creatures are actually damn dirty apes bent on world domination of the human race—well, hand me one of those silly chimpanzee-snatching gadgets. I absolutely agree with Justin that the goofy lampoons make for fun levels and character morphs, but snaring those slippery simians never gets challenging enough to stay enjoyable past the initial "Hey, how 'bout that—it's a monkey *Lord of the Rings*!" moment. In fact, the only challenge comes from fighting the god-awful camera. The "GO-GO-TURBO Japanese cheerleaders on speed" mood and shallow, stupid puzzles are the sort of thing shut-in *Naruto* fans thrive on, but I found them irritating. Thankfully, it was short.

PlayStation 2

WILD ARMS 4

Hex appeal



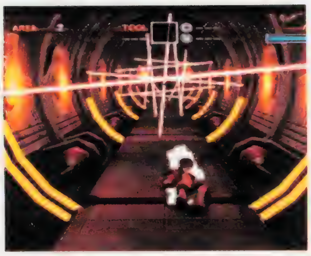
Most hex-based battle systems are dauntingly complex, but this one's a cinch—only three hexes.

Good: Great battle system, healthy dose of action
Bad: Idealistic teens save the postapocalyptic Wild West?
Varmints Include: Goblins, dragons, Gatling-gun bandit

JUSTIN: Spurs no longer rattling, *Wild Arms 4* moseys into town with its signature cowboy western take on console role-playing games strangely downplayed. Oh, you'll still get a few nostalgic nods to the series' six-shooter past, but the land of Filgaia is now more MegaTokyo 20XX than Dodge City 1849.

Battles are quick but tactical affairs thanks to a simplified hex-based system that makes positioning and turn order top priorities. You still fight way too often, but boss battles in particular can tax yer noodle in a pleasing fashion. Nextly, jumping, sliding, and solving *Zelda*-esque bomb and switch puzzles (plus the ability to slow down time) give dungeon/gulch-crawling a strong action-adventure feel.

Certain side-view sections feel pleasantly reminiscent of side-scrolling old-time platformers, and the cast is right likeable as well. The main character is OK as far as wide-eyed kids go, and the sword-slingin', nuclear-annihilation-survivin' Raquel is downright amiable—and kinda pretty. The story itself ain't half bad either, but naive and hokey moments come with the territory, understand.



SHANE: Weird...what the hell have they done to *Wild Arms*? This new installment will totally baffle fans of the series. With its gloomy postindustrial setting, moderately complex platforming bits, and surprisingly different battle system, *WA4* bears little resemblance to its charming, Wild West–themed predecessors. Once you get beyond that initial shock, though, you'll actually have a decent time here: The action-packed field maps feel fresh, and the simple hex-based battles add a shocking amount of strategy and originality to the mix. The adventure ends rather quickly, however—with only about 20 hours of gameplay to offer, *WA4* winds down just as it should be peaking.

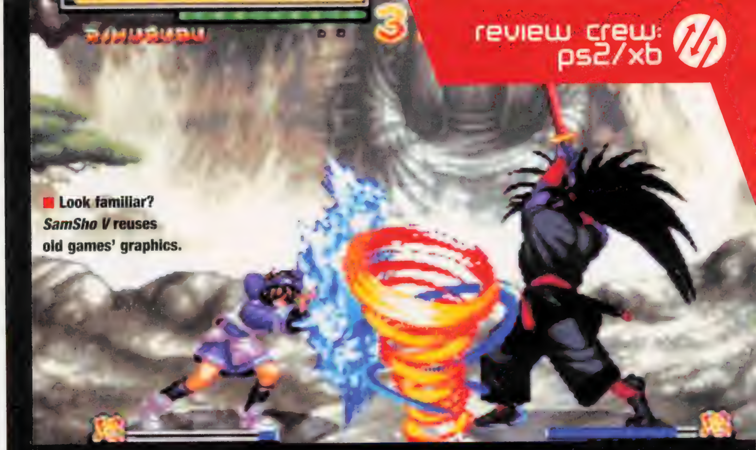
1UP.COM—JEREMY: I can't fault developer Media Vision for wanting to make *Wild Arms 4* stand out from the usual RPG schlock, but its ambition has been squandered by some really strange decisions. Rather than trying to create, say, unique characters or a creative story, *WA4* is just more of the usual "plucky kids save the world from an evil empire that wants ancient weapons"—a mash-up of scenes and ideas you've seen in a dozen other (better) RPGs. Even the sci-fi western feel has been discarded in favor of a more generic anime look. Instead, the developers decided to spice things up with *Klonoa*-style (PS1) 2D-esque platforming and a ludicrously over-designed combat system. Not entirely unremarkable...but mostly for the wrong reasons.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

JUSTIN	SHANE	JEREMY
8.0	7.0	6.0

Publisher: Xseed Games
Developer: Media Vision
Players: 1
ESRB: Teen

www.wildarms4.com



Look familiar? *SamSho V* reuses old games' graphics.

Xbox

ONLINE

SAMURAI SHODOWN V

Not quite seppuku, but close

Good: Choose from tons of characters, play *SamSho* online!
Bad: Probably the one *SamSho* you'd least like to play online
Newbie Mina's Annoying Sidekick: Encourages the quick K.O.

JON D: You've probably just asked one of the following three questions:

1. SAMURAI WHOZAWHATNOW? The arcade swan song to a '90s-sprung 2D fighter, *SamSho V* is what happens when a decade of solid arcade games is boiled down to one catch-all effort. If your fighting history starts with something in three dimensions and you're 2D-curious, it's a palatable sample of what used to be (that will play on a system that still is).

2. I STOPPED AT *SAMSHO III*—IS *V* ANY GOOD ON XBOX? Well, they merged the Slash/Bust variations of each character, oversimplified button functionality, and retooled or palette-swapped versions of existing characters for almost all the new samurai. So, yeah, it's probably the worst one. But if you want to play online, it's also the only one.

3. WILL HAOHMARU'S OUGI KOGETSU ZAN BE HINDERED BY INTERNET LATENCY? You'll be happy to know that online battles are silky smooth. Intermittent loading cuts short your real-time chatting and the online menu is a little archaic, but it's easy to create or find matches. You can even set up a tournament that spans multiple days and see if "Victoly!" will indeed be yours.

MARK: *SamSho V* doesn't just look like its decade-old prequels—much of it *is* its decade-old prequels, with graphics ripped directly from earlier games. I'd complain more about this "recycling" if the few characters and backgrounds they *did* add weren't such ugly, uninspired piles of pixels. Still, I can't deny that the gameplay—a hodgepodge of elements from the last few games plus some new bits—while uneven and hardly imaginative, can be fun in the right matchup (i.e., no one chooses the annoying or unbalanced characters). And it's nice to have all my favorite samurai together in one game, especially over the surprisingly robust and lag-free Xbox Live game, where you can fight other players of your same level worldwide and even set up tournaments.

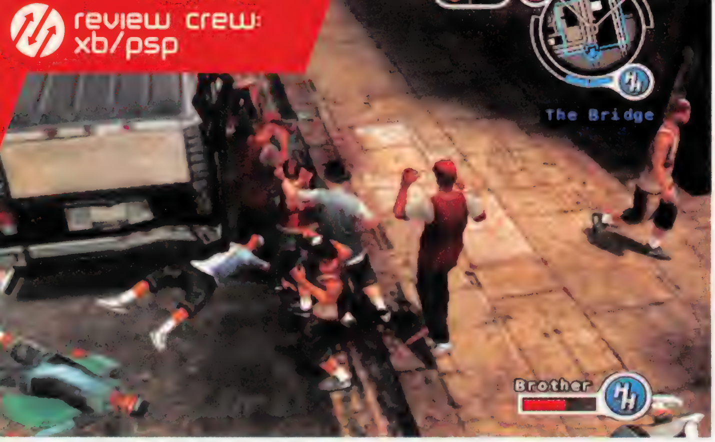
1UP.COM—CHE: It really doesn't get any more old school than a 2D SNK fighting game, and *SamSho V* is really starting to show its age. At a discount price, there's certainly nothing egregiously wrong with the game; *Shodown* packs plenty of characters and features a solid, straightforward fighting system reminiscent of its two previous incarnations. But this classic weapons-based fighting series has lost much of its soul. While the original cast moves as fluidly as ever, the newer faces are the epitome of mediocre design and animation. Luckily, Xbox Live saves the day. The ability to set up a tournament among friends is an awesome touch.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

JON D.	MARK	CHE
5.5	5.5	6.5

Publisher: SNK Playmore
Developer: SNK Playmore
Players: 1-2 (2 online)
ESRB: Teen

snkneogeousaconsumer.com



■ Xbox

CRIME LIFE: GANG WARS

SHAME OF THE MONTH

Living in a gangster's ninth circle of hell

Good: (This category left intentionally blank)
Bad: Graphics, fundamentally flawed gameplay
E-mail Us: If you can figure out main guy Tre's ethnicity

DEMIAN: This one time? I was rounding up some hookers for a rich guy in "Blingsley Hills"—we all get in a big street brawl, me, the hookers, and one of my pals against a bunch of guys that I know are bad because they're wearing blue vests. One of the hookers is getting low on health (if she dies, the mission restarts), so I leave the melee and run three blocks to the burger shop. I buy the ailing hooker—who's still fighting down the street, remember—a nice burger with fries, which refills her health bar. As the battle rages, I stay in the safety of the burger joint, monitoring health bars and buying food when folks are about to die. This was the only fun moment I had with *Crime Life*, and it wasn't even, you know, *literal* fun; it was "hawhaw, what a stupid game" fun.

I played *Crime Life* for over 10 hours before I put the controller down in disgust—not because it's a crass, mindless brawler designed to hit the lowest thug denominator (although that didn't help), but because it's so fundamentally terrible. The button-pounding gameplay is an ugly mess, the graphics, an even uglier mess, and the "urban" trappings are just embarrassing. I didn't finish *Crime*, but I know I didn't miss any good parts.

■ *Crime Life:* Play it just so you can say you did!

BRYAN: The back of the box reads, "So you wanna be a gangsta?" Oh *hell* no. From *Crime Life*'s ridiculous missions (steal "bling" so your boss can dress better, go get wasted and then beat the crap out of five nobodies—are you kidding me?) to its butt-ugly presentation, fighting for dummies combat, and horrible camera, this deeply flawed sandbox game is way overpriced even at $20. Just imagine for a second that you wanted a GI Joe action figure for your birthday, but instead someone bought you that shoddy, odd-looking doll dressed in army fatigues with a Spider-Man head from the dollar store. *Crime Life* is the bargain bin version of *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas*.

GREG S: This whole gangsta subgenre that grew up around *San Andreas* is hurting. And *Crime Life* takes it to a new low, making titles like *50 Cent* and *187: Ride or Die* seem like masterpieces. A weak, uninspired fighting system, where the gruesome finishing moves are the sole highlight, is at the heart of the problem. But bad as the combat is, the developers commit a cardinal sin by omitting any sort of co-op play in a game that desperately cries out for it.

What *Crime Life* needs even more, though, are graphics that don't look like they were done for a PS1 budget title. Seriously, *Crime Life* is one of the worst-looking games to come out this year. Just another reason to stay away, I guess.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

DEMIAN	BRYAN	GREG S.
2.5	2.0	1.5

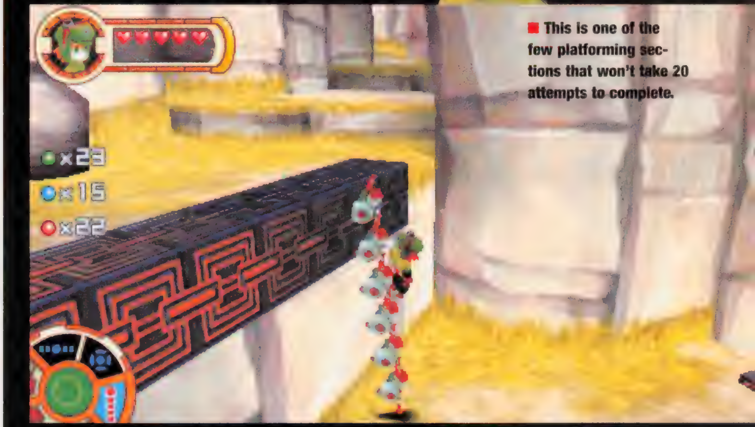
Publisher: Konami
Developer: Hothouse Creations
Players: 1
ESRB: Mature

www.konami-crimelife.com

■ PSP

TOKOBOT

Robots on Ambien



■ This is one of the few platforming sections that won't take 20 attempts to complete.

Good: Creative blend of puzzle solving and platforming
Bad: Sluggish control, unresponsive robots
Wishes It Were: *The Misadventures of Tron Bonne* (PS1)

CHRISTIAN: Explaining *Tokobot*'s story would be an insult to your intelligence. It mines the slime-soaked well of kids' anime clichés that gave us the *Pokémon* cartoon; the best thing about it is that developer Tecmo didn't spring for voice acting, so it's easy to ignore. Disregard the baby-game nonsense—the puzzle-filled platforming is the hook.

Bolt, the main character, has developed an unusual bond with the titular tokobots; his metal pals follow him everywhere. What he lacks in athletic prowess the bots compensate for. They can help him glide over chasms and battle enemies. They even join together to form bigger, badder robots.

The problem is, the control is so sluggish that combat is a chore while exploring is a bore. My excitement gradually metamorphosed into a frustrated detachment. The boss battles are clever and the puzzles can be fun, but too often they're just tedious to execute, thanks to Bolt's molasses-like gait.

The PSP needs more games like *Tokobot*—but *Tokobot* simply needs to be better. The idea is a very good one, but between the simple puzzles and snore-inducing pace, it's not what it should have been.

BRYAN: You'd think a game this damn cute would be quite accessible, yet it's way too hard for all the wrong reasons: The camera's atrocious, your character moves at a snail's pace (making combat very tricky), and every environment is eye-high in platforming segments that are frustrating death traps rather than challenging tests of agility. Difficulty aside, *Tokobot* also doesn't capitalize on the special transformations of its metallic costars; you'll find few instances that call for you to change into a sword-swinging samurai or a puzzle-solving crane. I'm all for more original titles on the PSP—just not this dud.

1UP.COM—JEREMY: *Tokobot* features one of the worst cameras I've experienced in years, which tag-teams with the lousy combat controls to create a game that's often more frustrating than entertaining. That's slightly heartbreaking because I really wanted to love *Tokobot*—it totally taps into the same vibe as *Pikmin* and *Tron Bonne*, two of my favorite games. Lead a squad of tiny companions into massive, ancient dungeons while seeking treasure...what's not to like? Unfortunately, managing the tokobots is a pain thanks to their lack of self-reliance, and their slow, clumsy attack modes make it hard to fight back in tight situations—you know, when you need them most. There's still a good time to be had, if you're very patient.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)

CHRISTIAN	BRYAN	JEREMY
5.5	4.0	6.0

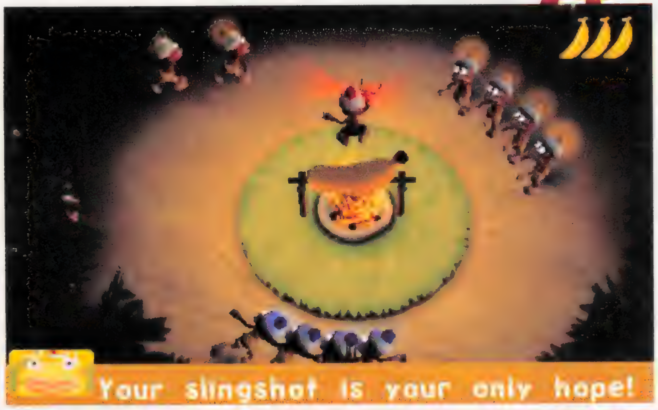
Publisher: Tecmo
Developer: Tecmo
Players: 1
ESRB: Everyone

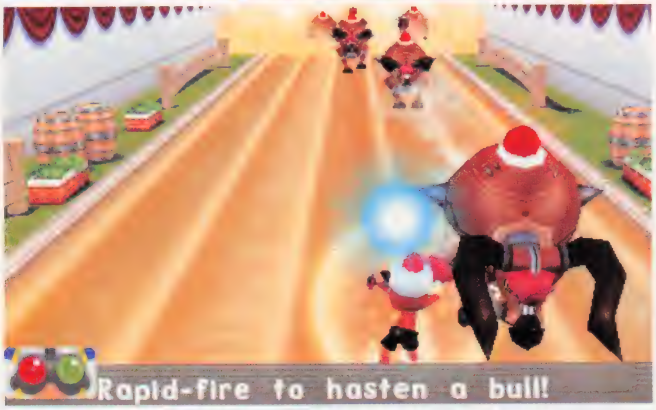
www.tecmogames.com

PSP

APE ESCAPE ACADEMY

This monkey's got something to hide


Your slingshot is your only hope!

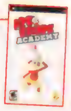


THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	JENNIFER	ROBERT	JARED
	4.5	5.5	4.5

Publisher: Sony CEA
Developer: Sony CEI
Players: 1 (2-4 via local Wi-Fi)
ESRB: Everyone 10+

www.playstation.com

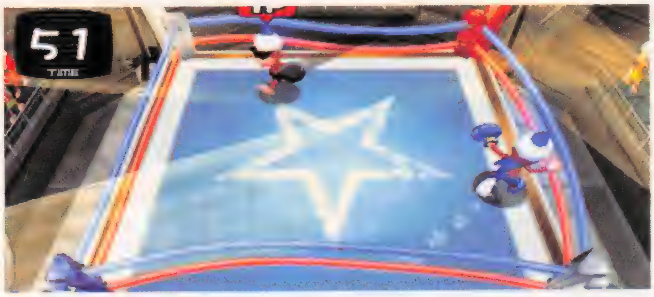
Good: A *WarioWare*-inspired title for PSP
Bad: Not even close to *WarioWare* in quality
But Like *WarioWare*: Cut-scenes feature creepy characters



JENNIFER: As a perennial reviewer of *Mario Party* and a committed follower of *WarioWare*, I'm pretty open-minded when it comes to bundles of minigames. I understand that stupid silliness in 12-second bursts can be wildly amusing and addictive. But *Ape Escape Academy* makes me appreciate those successfully silly games all the more. Some of the minigames here are OK—I'm not sure you can mess up bowling or rochambeau. But the bad ones are just painful, because they're either weirdly esoteric (quick, identify the national flag of Macedonia!!!), have awful controls (good luck on the monkey totem pole one), or are too confusing (Simian Suplex? I can't even pronounce it right!). Plus, the single-player mission structure is unnecessarily limiting. You have to complete rows on a tic-tac-toe board, which was probably supposed to add a little challenge but ends up wasting time if you don't win in the right spots. A game like this ought to excel in multiplayer, but the wireless mode gives you just a small handful of lame minigames to play. If you're absolutely desperate for some mediocre entertainment on your PSP, this provides glimmers of fun. But you have to wade through a lot of frustration to catch them.

ROBERT: Maybe I've been spoiled by the channel-surfing short attention span of *WarioWare*, but *Ape Escape Academy* seems so very slow. When a game takes 30 seconds to play, load time, which is wrapped around each short game in *Academy*, is a total buzz kill. Many of the games themselves are so convoluted they require several tries to understand, slowing the pace further. Others simply go on much longer than they should. *Academy* has a few really good games (the bullfight and rock-paper-scissors battle), several fun games (soccer and banana bridge), and several not-so-fun games (the quizzes are a real bummer). But if you need a PSP minigame fix, this'll tide you over.

1UP.COM—JARED: Where *Ape Escape Academy* should feel like a festive minigame extravaganza, it comes off as more of a collection of half-assed prototypes due to the overly complex challenges, unresponsive controls, and complete lack of coherency. It's a sad state of design when a game like *WarioWare* can teach you how to play a scene with a single word of instruction, while *Academy* falls flat on its face after both an instructional loading screen and video tutorial. Toss in sometimes-choppy graphics along with a gimped local wireless mode (only four games? Are you kidding?) and you have yet another failure of enjoyable pick-up-and-play gaming in your hands.



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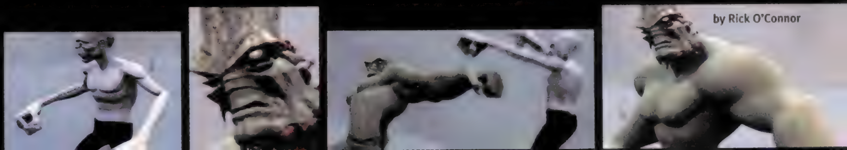
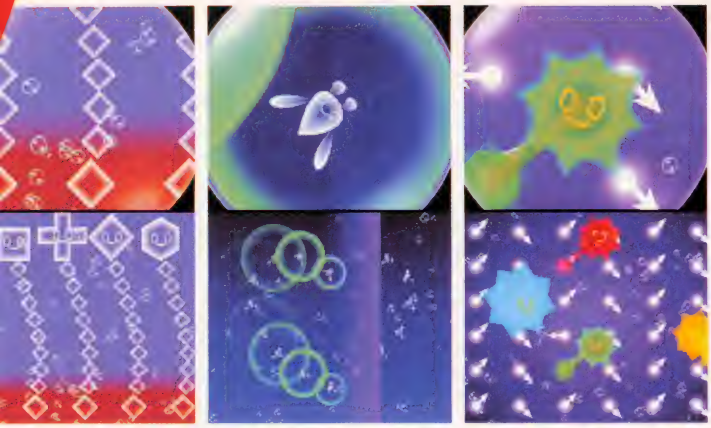




DS

ELECTROPLANKTON

Dude, don't bogart that DS

Good: Fantastically innovative
Bad: No gameplay
Guess It Was Too Hard: To add that save feature

JENNIFER: *Electroplankton* really threw me for a loop. I'd seen the demos of this music-maker and assumed they were early versions of something that would knock my socks off—once the real "game" had been designed. Unfortunately, it seems like the development team must've been really busy... playing *Guitar Hero* and *Zelda: Ocarina of Time*. See, there is no game here; *Electroplankton* is more of an "experience." You can choose from 10 different compositional modes, in which you use the touch screen to manipulate notes and sounds. *Electroplankton* takes care of the rhythm for you, so you can keep changing the sounds and mess around with notes while creating an electronic song.

And that's all she wrote. *Electroplankton* might have been more engaging if it gave you goals, such as coming up with a certain number of notes in a given amount of time or having to replicate songs and riff on them. It should, at the very least, have allowed you to save your work; instead, your musical creations are fleeting and forgettable. It's too bad, because this is an unusually cool and weird exercise in technological creativity. So, while my score may seem low, keep in mind it would have been even lower if not for that.

Spins the other way south of the equator.

SHANE: Anyone can have fun messing around with *Electroplankton*'s cutesy music-making applications for 15 minutes, but unless you're an artsy Brian Eno wannabe, you won't get much out of it. This thing really isn't a game at all, nor could you call it serious music-composing software (since you can't save your creations). Yet, for the right people... who are firmly in the proper (preferably altered) state of mind, *Electroplankton* becomes a trippy, transcendent, and beautiful fusion of art and music. And I guess I'm one of those people, because I've spent plenty of time exploring the subtle depths here. I've even seen musicians "play" *Electroplankton* as an instrument at live shows, and the results were absolutely stunning.

MARK: The beauty of *Electroplankton* is that anyone who tries it will have fun making tunes in minutes, thanks to the friendly, intuitive interface. The problem with *Electroplankton* is that, after those first few minutes, everyone who tries it will wonder what the hell is the point. Without any option to record or store your creations, you can't mix together tracks you make with the different critters, much less save a cool tune you stumble onto for your friends to hear. *Electroplankton* is just a novelty—its awesome potential is destroyed by this simple, obvious, unforgivable mistake.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	JENNIFER	SHANE	MARK
	5.0	7.0	5.0

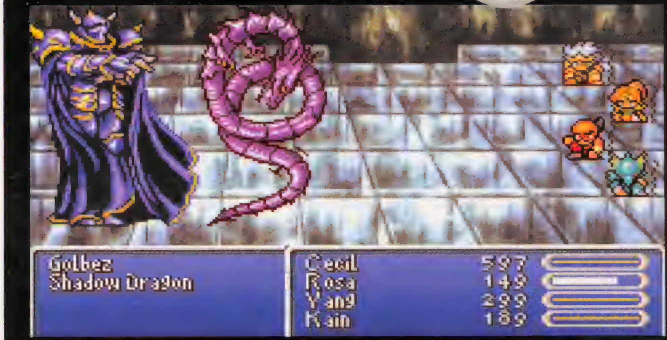
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Nintendo
Players: 1
ESRB: Everyone

www.nintendo.com

GBA

FINAL FANTASY IV ADVANCE

Potent Portable for $30, Alex



Good: Classic role-playing game made even better
Bad: Frustrating bits of slowdown
New to You: Two huge dungeons

SHANE: When this revered fantasy epic first hit the Super NES (as *Final Fantasy II*) in 1991, it made an astonishing impact—most players had never experienced such an intricate, involving role-playing game without the aid of a dice bag. Fourteen years later, the adventure retains its appeal in portable form, and developer Square Enix wisely grafts some meaty new bits onto the quest to surprise returning fans.

The game's advanced age does show through: *FFIV*'s broad-strokes story line and shallow characters lack the nuanced depth of those in modern RPGs, but at least a reworked translation omits many of the original's groaners. Thankfully, the game's engaging battles, challenging dungeons, and plentiful secrets adamantly withstand the ravages of time. And *FF* vets will swoon over the enhanced graphics, nifty gameplay tweaks (bring whichever party members you want into the final dungeon!), and innovative (not to mention colossal) new bonus dungeons. Don't expect absolute perfection, though: Odd bouts of loading in the battle menu screens dampen your old-school RPG buzz a tad, but it's nothing unforgivable.

CHRISTIAN: Few games have the same resonance with me as *Final Fantasy IV*—I feel that it was the cornerstone of what made the Super NES great. It's simply my favorite *Final Fantasy* game, even 14 years on. *FFIV* strikes an excellent balance between an interesting story—which is buoyed by the new, very readable translation—and entertaining gameplay. The battles are fast, and the characters have their own unique and appealing skills. The addition of a dash to the GBA version makes exploring snappy, and the redone graphics look great. This game set the tone for the *Final Fantasy* series for years to come. Very few GBA RPGs can hope to compare.

1UP.COM—JEREMY: I'll agree that *FFIV* set the standard for subsequent *Final Fantasy* games, but between the dopey 1991 vintage translation and disappointingly brief quest, I've always considered it one of the least enjoyable entries in the series (sorry, Christian). But this new version has forced me to reconsider. The new script gives the plot much-needed cohesion while toning down the goofy melodrama, and the impressive bonus features double the game's length with seriously challenging dungeon crawling and a compelling new combat roster. The reworked graphics and music are classy, too. I could have done with a little more *Dawn of Souls*–style fan service (bosses from other games or whatever), and the slowdown during battles is annoying. Even so, it's a phenomenal portable RPG—bring on *FFV* and *FFVI*.

Mind-blowing 3D effects from 1991.

THE VERDICTS (OUT OF 10)	SHANE	CHRISTIAN	JEREMY
	9.0	9.0	8.5

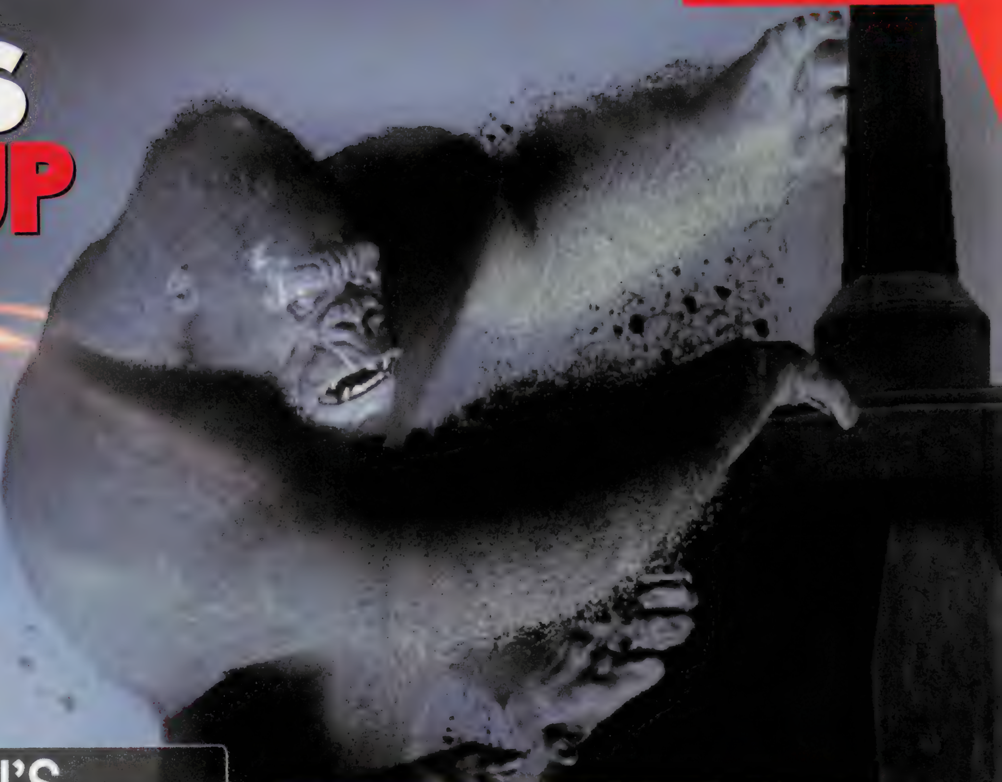
Publisher: Nintendo
Developer: Square Enix
Players: 1
ESRB: Everyone 10+

www.nintendo.com

REVIEWS WRAP-UP

The games that were too little...or too late

Oh man, we wanted to review these games so bad! But they showed up late. Or we ran out of room. Or our dog ate them.

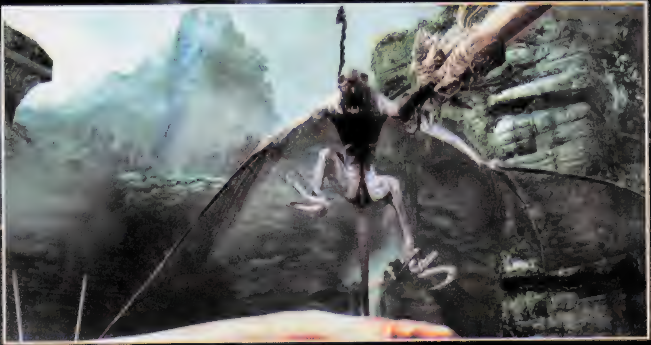


PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG

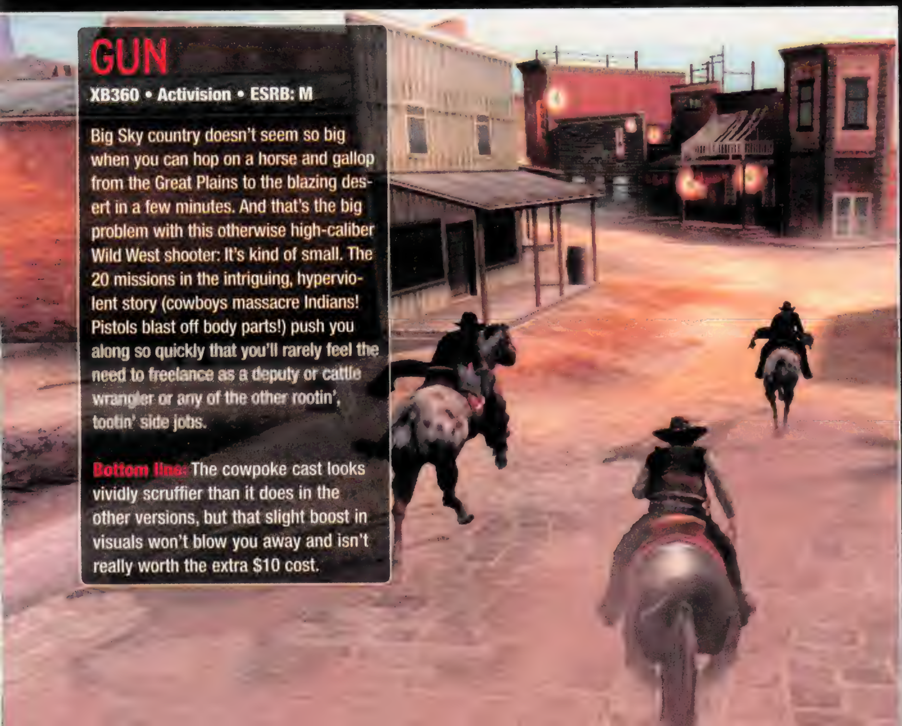
XB360 • Ubisoft • ESRB: T

We ran a full review of *King Kong*'s PS2 and XB outings in last month's issue, and after playing through this next-gen version, we can say that it's the same great game, just slightly prettier. Except when it's not—though we didn't run into issues ourselves, Ubisoft President Yves Guillemot told BBC.co.uk, "We have a problem on the 360. The screen is dark on some TVs and it totally changes the experience." Furthermore, the U.S. branch of Ubi is "actively investigating isolated reports of resolution issues on specific plasma screens," according to a spokesperson.

Bottom line: Stick with the PS2 and XB versions to be safe. They look great anyway.



The Pterosaurs prove to be formid—wait, is that a wang?

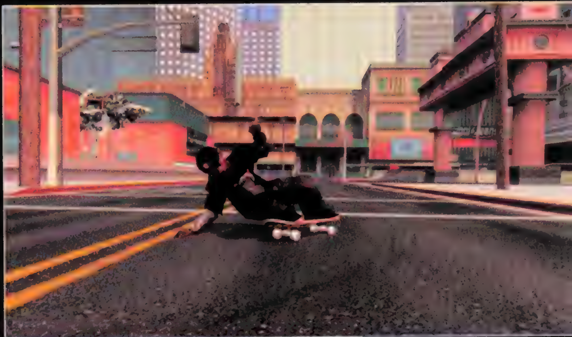


GUN

XB360 • Activision • ESRB: M

Big Sky country doesn't seem so big when you can hop on a horse and gallop from the Great Plains to the blazing desert in a few minutes. And that's the big problem with this otherwise high-caliber Wild West shooter: It's kind of small. The 20 missions in the intriguing, hyperviolent story (cowboys massacre Indians! Pistols blast off body parts!) push you along so quickly that you'll rarely feel the need to freelance as a deputy or cattle wrangler or any of the other rootin', tootin' side jobs.

Bottom line: The cowpoke cast looks vividly scruffier than it does in the other versions, but that slight boost in visuals won't blow you away and isn't really worth the extra $10 cost.



Tony Hawk's American Wasteland

XB360 • Activision • ESRB: T — Put the latest *Tony* in the 360 disc tray and one thing immediately stands out: The cut-scenes suddenly seem *hideous*, even though they're pretty much exactly the same as the PS2/XB versions'. Otherwise, the L.A. landscape and skaters look a little nicer, but aside from the unlockable gamer profile achievements, the 360 version's biggest change is its $60 price tag.

Bottom line: This is the best—and most expensive—*American Wasteland*, but if you already own another version, there's nothing to see here. ➤

REVIEWS WRAP-UP (CONT.)

psp quickies

Infected

PSP • Majesco • ESRB: M

Once you get a hang of this third-person shooter's controls, you'll find them well suited for the PSP's only-one-analog-stick setup. And while single-player zombie busting is amusing (though repetitive), *Infected*'s real hook is its clever multiplayer. Win local Wi-Fi or Internet matches to spread your customizable avatar into the losers' games (provided the schmucks don't cancel out of the battle beforehand).

Bottom line: A quality original, Internet-enabled property for PSP.

The Sims 2

PSP • EA Games • ESRB: T — The life simulator returns, with slightly less potty micromanagement and slightly more direct control of your sim via amusing minigames. But the loading times on PSP are too frequent and delay the already slow-paced action.

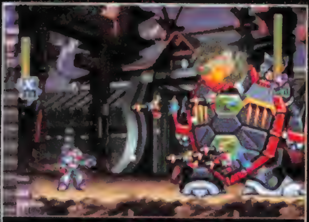
Bottom line: If you grew tired of *The Sims* long ago, this won't renew your enthusiasm for obsessive home furnishing.

WWE SmackDown! vs. RAW 2006

PSP • THQ • ESRB: T — With all the features (and twice the load time!) of its console brother, it's tough to find major faults with this handheld port. The ability to take your PS2 data on the go is nice, and when you link the two versions you'll unlock Jake the Snake (before he went off the deep end), too.

Bottom line: Killer load times aside, *SmackDown!* is easily the most enjoyable portable wrestler out there.

multiplatform smorgasbord



Mega Man X Collection

PS2/GC • Capcom • ESRB: E

Experience the *X* series' rise and fall with this compilation of the first six games. Unlike *Anniversary Collection*, these ports have no weird control probs.

Bottom line: Six good-to-great action-ers, reproduced with loving care.

Devil May Cry 3 Special Edition

PS2 • Capcom • ESRB: M

Consider this an official apology for the obscenely difficult *DMC3*. Capcom axed the unfair continue system and made Dante's bro a playable character.

Bottom line: A bargain at $20.

Tamagotchi Connection Corner Shop

DS • Bandai • ESRB: E

Corner Shop is the latest of Tamagotchi's efforts to win back the virtual pet crown from those rascally *Nintendogs*. Its limited selection of minigames (in which you earn money to buy your little critter goodies) isn't much of a threat to '*Dog* dominance, though. Players earn special bonuses for sharing the game with friends (via Wi-Fi), but is Tamagotchi swag really worth risking a friendship over?

Bottom line: This might appeal to kids who really, really like minigames. Painfully lame minigames, that is. Skip it and just get a real Tamagotchi instead. You can kill it at your leisure.

REVIEWS ARCHIVE

Where our reviews go to retire in luxury...

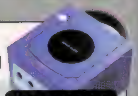
Half-Life 2's Gordon Freeman: one angry nerd.

BLAST OFF

Was it good for you? The 360 launch, that is. We decide to compare the 360's four highest-scoring launch games to the best of the most recent console launch titles....

Xbox 360
November 22, 2005

Project Gotham Racing 3 • Microsoft	9.0 • 8.5 • 9.5
Call of Duty 2 Activision	8.5 • 9.0 • 9.0
Amped 3 2K Sports	7.5 • 8.5 • 8.0
Madden NFL 06 EA Sports	8.0 • 7.5 • 8.0



GameCube
November 18, 2001

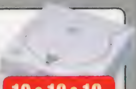
Super Smash Bros. Melee • Nintendo	9.5 • 9.5 • 9.5
Star Wars: Rogue Leader • LucasArts	9.0 • 9.0 • 9.0
Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 3 • Activision	9.0 • 9.0 • 8.5
Madden NFL 2002 EA Sports	8.5 • 9.0 • 9.0

Xbox
November 15, 2001

Halo Microsoft	10 • 10 • 10
Oddworld: Munch's Oddysee • Microsoft	9.0 • 9.0 • 9.0
Madden NFL 2002 EA Sports	9.0 • 9.0 • 9.0
Dead or Alive 3 Tecmo	8.0 • 7.5 • 8.5

PlayStation 2
October 26, 2000

Ridge Racer V Namco	8.5 • 9.5 • 9.0
SSX EA Sports Big	9.5 • 8.5 • 9.0
Swing Away Golf EA Sports	7.5 • 8.0 • 6.5
Dynasty Warriors 2 Koei	7.5 • 6.0 • 6.5



Dreamcast
September 9, 1999

Soul Calibur Namco	10 • 10 • 10
Sonic Adventure Sega	9.5 • 8.5 • 9.0
NFL Blitz 2000 Midway	8.0 • 9.0 • 9.0
Monaco Grand Prix Ubisoft	8.0 • 8.0 • 8.0

GAME	SYSTEM	VERDICT	SCORES (out of 10)			AWARD
Amped 3	XB360	■ Crazy-ass cut-scenes are fresh, bright spots in this huge snowboarding game	7.5	8.5	8.0	Silver
Animal Crossing: Wild World	DS	■ The same insane fairy-tale fishing/talking/walking game is now portable and online	7.5	7.0	9.0	
Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	PS2/XB	■ What pretend war is good for: explosions, rad weapons, and online havoc with friends	9.0	8.0	8.0	Silver
Blitz: The League	PS2/XB	■ Controversial, arcade-soiled gridiron game will shock those uptight NFL execs	8.0	8.0	9.0	Silver
Call of Duty 2	XB360	■ A fully functional military shooter with killer A.I., sound, maps, and gameplay	8.5	9.0	9.0	Silver
Castlevania: Curse of Darkness	PS2/XB	■ Lacks a bit in looks and scope, but offers deep combat and weapon customization	8.5	7.5	7.0	
The Con	PSP	■ Rotten camera and long-ass load times ruin this mishmash of strategy and brawling	5.0	2.5	4.5	
Condemned: Criminal Origins	XB360	■ Clunky controls hobble this macabre survival-horror title's deeply eerie gameplay	7.0	6.0	8.5	
Crash Tag Team Racing	PS2/XB/GC	■ Kiddie-safe kartfest with weak platforming elements and lame minigames	5.5	3.0	5.0	
Dragon Quest VIII	PS2	■ A polished and perfectly respectable return to the rich, fun RPG style of the past	9.0	8.0	9.0	Silver
Fatal Frame III: The Tormented	PS2	■ Going ghost busting with young hotties and a camera should be more fun than this	6.5	7.5	7.0	
Fire Emblem: Path of Radiance	GC	■ Grid-based strategy series with a ton of characters brought into the 3D realm	8.5	8.0	8.0	Silver
Grand Theft Auto: Liberty City Stories	PSP	■ Senators, lock up the children: The *GTA* experience is now portable	9.5	9.0	9.0	Gold
GripShift	PSP	■ Ride the brake around ugly courses and play with a track editor that isn't so awful	7.0	6.5	3.0	
Guitar Hero	PS2	■ Now that ain't workin'—that's the way you do it. You play the guitar on the...PS2	9.0	9.0	9.0	Gold
Gun	PS2/XB/GC	■ *GTA* meets *Deadwood*—a sight short on length, but still a rootin', tootin' shooter	7.5	8.0	7.5	
Gunstar Super Heroes	GBA	■ A semidisappointing, yet solid, sequel to the beloved Genesis side-scrolling shooter	7.5	8.0	7.5	
Half-Life 2	XB	■ A beautiful port of the brilliant PC shooter—stellar physics, atmosphere, and action	9.0	9.0	9.5	Gold
Jak X: Combat Racing	PS2	■ Car combat that never really catches up to its peppier peers	7.0	7.0	6.5	
James Bond 007: From Russia With Love	PS2/XB/GC	■ Sir Connery voices the titular character in a flaccid action-shooter that plays itself	6.5	6.0	6.0	
Kameo: Elements of Power	XB360	■ Lovely, but brief and sorta disappointing, adventure teases with flashes of brilliance	6.0	6.0	7.0	
Kingdom of Paradise	PSP	■ Hack-n-slash disguised as an RPG with lousy A.I. but sweet graphics and rad moves	7.0	7.5	5.5	
L.A. Rush	PS2/XB	■ This racing game offers a ton of cool cars that crash in random, frustrating ways	6.5	6.5	5.5	
The Lord of the Rings: Tactics	PSP	■ Although cinematic and fresh, this tactical title's sloppy presentation frustrates	6.5	3.5	6.0	
The Legend of Heroes: A Tear of Vermillion	PSP	■ "Old school" doesn't always mean "all good," but this RPG is classically sound	6.5	8.5	7.0	
Madden NFL 06	XB360	■ More of a gridiron evolution than revolution	8.0	7.5	8.0	
Magna Carta: Tears of Blood	PS2	■ An RPG with strong visual design that drops the ball with an icky battle system	7.5	6.0	5.5	
Mario & Luigi: Partners in Time	DS	■ Fun, dungeon-rific RPG with action-filled combat featuring your favorite Bros.	8.5	8.0	9.0	Silver
Mario Kart DS	DS	■ Retains Mario's status as champ of *Kart* games, now portable and online	9.0	8.5	8.5	Silver
Mario Party 7	GC	■ Seventh entry in the board-game-that-plays-itself series is just what you'd expect	6.5	6.5	5.0	
Mario Tennis: Power Tour	GBA	■ Mario's chatty, RPG-ish tennis game benefits from simple controls and fun multiplayer	8.0	8.0	4.0	
The Matrix: Path of Neo	PS2/XB	■ Playing through the movie trilogy would be a bit more fun with a better combo system	7.0	8.0	4.5	
Metroid Prime Pinball	DS	■ The normally dignified Ms. Aran is dropped into a decent pinball game	7.5	7.0	8.0	
NBA Live 06	XB360	■ Visually, it's the only sports game that screams "next gen"	8.0	7.5	7.0	
NBA 2K6	XB360	■ Plays great, but where's the code to unlock the improved graphics?	6.0	7.0	5.0	
Need for Speed: Most Wanted	PS2/XB/GC	■ The latest in this racing series lets you drop the hammer on the run from the law	8.0	7.5	7.0	
Need for Speed: Most Wanted	XB360	■ The 360 version's differences are strictly cosmetic and probably not worth the extra $	7.0	7.5	7.5	
NHL 06	PS2/XB/GC	■ The NHL series is still a bit arcadey, but it remains on the path to respectability	7.0	7.5	7.5	
NHL 2K6	PS2/XB	■ A beautiful-looking game. Now, where's the goalie A.I?	7.5	7.0	6.0	
Operation Flashpoint: Elite	XB	■ This überreal military shooter's multiplayer and maps help make up for how ugly it is	8.5	7.0	8.5	Silver
Peter Jackson's King Kong	PS2/XB/GC	■ A cinematic, breathtaking action-adventure game that is fit for a *King*...um...*Kong*...	8.5	8.5	9.0	Silver
Pokémon XD: Gale of Darkness	GC	■ The series makes some strides on the Cube with this passable RPG for Pokémaniacs	7.0	6.0	7.0	
Ratchet: Deadlocked	PS2	■ Chicken guns and robots galore spice up this platformer-shooter	8.0	6.0	8.0	
Resident Evil 4	PS2	■ Stunning graphics, thrilling gameplay, and extras just for the PS2	9.5	9.5	9.5	Gold
Ridge Racer 6	XB360	■ A solid racer underneath embarrassingly lackluster (is this really next gen?) visuals	6.0	6.0	7.5	
Romancing SaGa	PS2	■ Wide-open, but totally confusing, RPG means a ton of wandering and not much fun	7.0	6.5	5.0	
Shadow the Hedgehog	PS2/XB/GC	■ An adventure shooter with awful targeting and camera, starring Sonic's ugly-ass twin	6.0	5.5	3.0	
SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Fireteam Bravo	PSP	■ This combat shooter is pretty and portable but lacks the balls of the console version	6.5	7.5	8.5	
SOCOM 3: U.S. Navy SEALs	PS2	■ Multiplayer, with vehicles and up to 32 players online, makes up for the dumb-ass A.I.	8.0	8.0	9.0	Silver
Sonic Rush	DS	■ A step back to the rushing, roller-coaster, side-scrolling *Sonic* done properly for DS	8.0	8.0	8.0	Silver
Soul Calibur III	PS2	■ All the smooth, responsive fighting gameplay you've come to expect from this series	9.0	9.0	9.0	Gold
Spider-Man 2	DS	■ If your spider sense is on the fritz, let us warn you to avoid this ho-hum adventure	6.0	5.5	3.0	
SSX on Tour	PS2/XB/GC	■ More of the same snowy excitement you'll find in *SSX 3*—now with skiing	8.0	9.0	8.0	Silver
SSX on Tour	PSP	■ Awkward to play on the PSP, it's still a decent snow-sport game	7.0	7.0	8.5	
Star Wars Battlefront 2	PSP	■ This packed-with-*Star-Wars*-toys shooter's controls make it too awkward to enjoy	6.0	7.0	6.0	
Stubbs the Zombie	XB	■ Third-person, zombie *Halo*. Sound weird? It is, but brain-eating mayhem should be	8.5	8.5	9.0	Silver
Suikoden Tactics	PS2	■ A decent strategy-RPG and a gentle intro to the rather confusing *Suikoden* series	7.0	9.0	6.0	
Super Mario Strikers	GC	■ This varsity-level soccer-playing-plumber game lacks the variety to make it great	7.0	7.0	7.0	
Tony Hawk's American Wasteland	PS2/XB/GC	■ A lack of fresh, new stuff makes this addition to the skater series a bit eh, whatever...	7.0	7.5	7.0	
Trapt	PS2	■ This build-it-and-they-will-come-to-be-impaled trap-setting adventure is repetitive	6.0	6.5	7.0	
True Crime: New York City	PS2/XB/GC	■ An ambitious, but unfortunately buggy, ugly *GTA* clone set in the Big Apple	3.5	6.0	5.5	
Viewtiful Joe: Double Trouble	DS	■ A modern, but repetitive, update to the side-scrolling brawlers we grew up with	8.0	7.5	7.0	
Viewtiful Joe: Red Hot Rumble	GC	■ A chaotic, button-smashing frenzy of fighting, bubble gum, and moviemaking	4.5	9.0	6.0	
The Warriors	PS2/XB	■ We dig this sweet resurrection of both a '70s cult-classic film and the brawler genre	8.5	8.0	8.5	Silver
Without Warning	PS2/XB	■ There are no heroes in this lackluster third-person shooter with a preposterous plot	4.5	5.0	1.5	
WWE SmackDown! vs. RAW 2006	PS2	■ Story mode is much improved, but tag-team partners still act like idiots in the ring	6.5	8.0	7.0	

*Games in red are previous Game of the Month winners.

SEANBABY'S 7 WORST 7s

Because the zero worst zeroes is stupidly impossible

We admit it: We've handed out a few overly generous scores in our past 199 issues. Maybe we were too easily wowed by our love of future copping or ninja surfing to notice terrible gameplay. I can relate: Love once clouded my judgment so badly that I went beyond Earth numbers and gave a game the score of Troll Riding a Hot Dog (behold my shame in *EGM* #174, pg. 201).

So to make amends, I'm going back and rescrutinizing our reviews of seven games that scored the much-better-than-deserved average of 7.0. If you have these back issues, rip out the old reviews and paste in these new ones. Draw a few dongs in the margins while you're at it. *—Seanbaby*

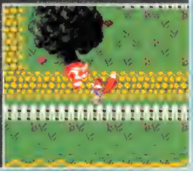
CONKER'S POCKET TALES

7

1999 • Game Boy Color • EGM #122

Original Review: "Although the graphics aren't the greatest, they do the job in a children's storybook kind of way."

This is a *Conker* children's game. Which is strange, since with all of the religious talking vegetables out there that one could base a children's game on, why would you handicap yourself by making yours about a mascot who only got attention because every single puzzle in his N64 and Xbox games was solved by squirting bodily fluids on it? This G-rated version proves that when you take away the risk of hepatitis, Conker really loses his edge. And when you take away any fun platforming elements, you just have a boring remote-controlled squirrel. I'm not saying that it would have been fun if his face was launching snot or if he was swinging a diaper around, but at least then you'd have a reason to look at the game, if only to hate it.



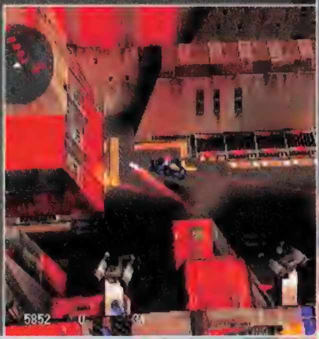
FUTURE COP L.A.P.D.

6

3067 • PlayStation • EGM #111

Original Review: "One last thing: What's with the lame name?"

OK, what the #@$&! does a game have to be named for you to think it's not a lame title? Calling this *Future Cop L.A.P.D.* is one step down from naming it *Jean Claude Van Damme's Nipple Cowgirl Command*, and it tells us everything we need to know about the game's hero—he's half future, half cop, all L.A.P.D. If this were anything more than a scream-at-the-crappy-camera simulator, it would have been game of the year. Please note: When in the actual future, future cops will just be called by their first names. Like Zortran or Future Jack.



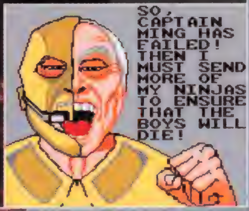
SURF NINJAS

5

1993 • Game Gear • EGM #48

Original Review: "*Surf Ninjas* by Sega for the Game Gear isn't a California-dreaming cart. These ninjas are serious."

How desensitized to ninja danger did this reviewer think we were? Must he point out that a game about ninjas is *not* about sunbathing? That's like taking a zoo tour and hearing, "Up next are the Alaskan Death Bears. Keep in mind these are not the kind of bears that bake for you when you dangle your honey-covered leg into their cage." Although no reviewer mentioned this game's crappiness, one did note that it was based on an upcoming movie and "that should really stimulate sales." Thanks!



SO, CAPTAIN MING HAS FAILED! THEN I MUST SEND MORE OF MY NINJAS TO ENSURE THAT THE BOYS WILL DIE!

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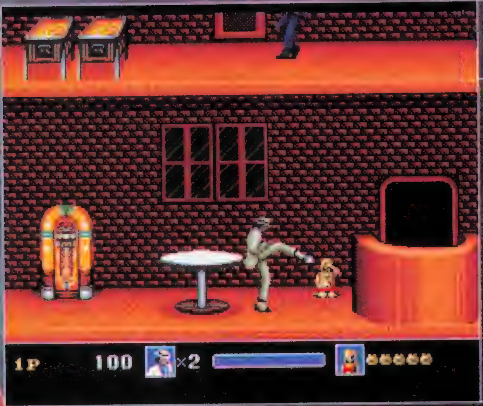

MOONWALKER

1990 • Genesis • EGM #14

Original Review: Three of the four reviewers made a Michael Jackson pun: You should be warned that I'm about to quote them below.

Pun #1: "It's a bit too easy of a game, and unfortunately, you won't take very long to 'beat it'."

Pun #2: "*Moonwalker* isn't as 'BAD' as it's hyped up to be."

Pun #3: "This game is no 'thriller,' but decent nevertheless."

Later they all wrote this follow-up review: "After looking back on what we typed, how do we 'LIVE WITH OURSELVES?'" This is the only game that's on the list because it was rated too *low* with its average score of 7.0. This is at least a 15. It's based on the true story of Michael Jackson turning into a car and a spaceship to rescue children by dancing until kidnappers explode, although a friend of mine theorizes that the villains are actually social workers desperate to keep Michael from the kids, and they're only dancing to disguise themselves as fellow child predators. Either way, *EGM* stands corrected.

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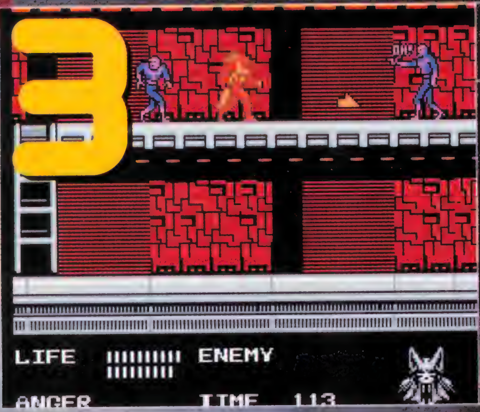


WEREWOLF: THE LAST WARRIOR

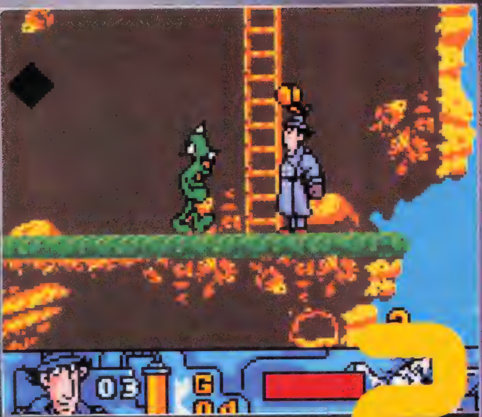
1990 • NES • EGM #17

Original Review: "Very timely and exciting theme action game."

This might seem like an insane mix of random words instead of a description of *Werewolf* for Nintendo, but it was in fact timely, since Congress had just passed the 1990 Spooky Werewolf Act. This was simply one of many reactionary works that followed the controversial act, my favorite of which was *Golden Girls* episode 58: "Bingo! (Rose Bangs a Wolfman at Bingo)." The same reviewer goes on to describe the gameplay by saying, "The main character has many, many different move techniques throughout average gameplay." I don't have a joke about that. That's just top-notch writing.

He then ends his review by shouting, "Buttons 'A' and 'B' should have been switched! Music orchestrates the 'transformation!'" Are these the unedited notes from his Nintendo *Werewolf* class? Go ahead and gripe about the button switching if you must, but when you're telling me blatantly obvious things like the music orchestrates something, why not finish up and say the graphics display the game and the controller manipulates the character?

2



INSPECTOR GADGET

2001 • Game Boy Color • EGM #140

Original Review: "Is this music from the show? I can't tell. It sounds crappy and is not recognizable.... And what's the point of the end-of-level puzzles? They're lame!"

I like these classic reviews because, if they're for games about cartoon characters, they always start with useless lines like "Inspector Gadget is up to his old tricks again! And this time, boy oh boy!"

I can see how this game averaged a 7 the first time through, though, since who could pick up something called *Inspector Gadget* and not subconsciously lower all their standards? I also like classic reviews of cartoon games because they end with lines like "If you're a fan of the Inspector, keep an eye out for this exciting on-the-go adventure! Go go gadget GAME BOY!"

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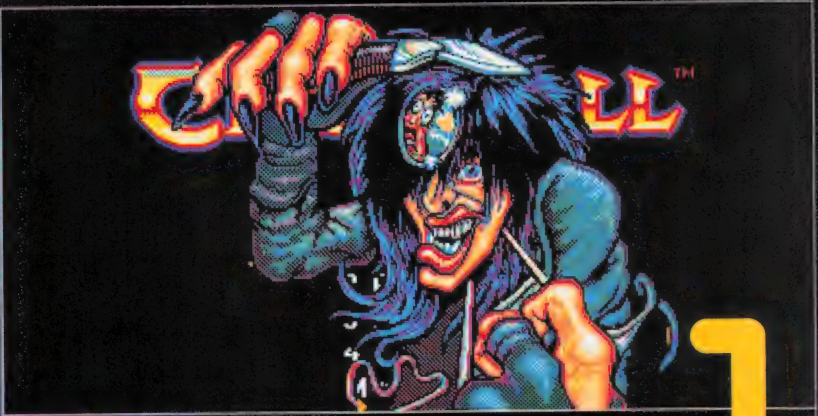


CRÜE BALL

1992 • Genesis • EGM #41

Original Review: "Awesome musical tracks straight from a famous rock band will keep you a-hummin' throughout the course of the game."

Yeah! A-hum along to a famous rock band's smash hits "Bloopdy Bloop (Ksh! Ksh! Ksh!)" and "[unintelligible static]" Seriously, did this reviewer listen to all his heavy-metal music through his Game Boy speaker?

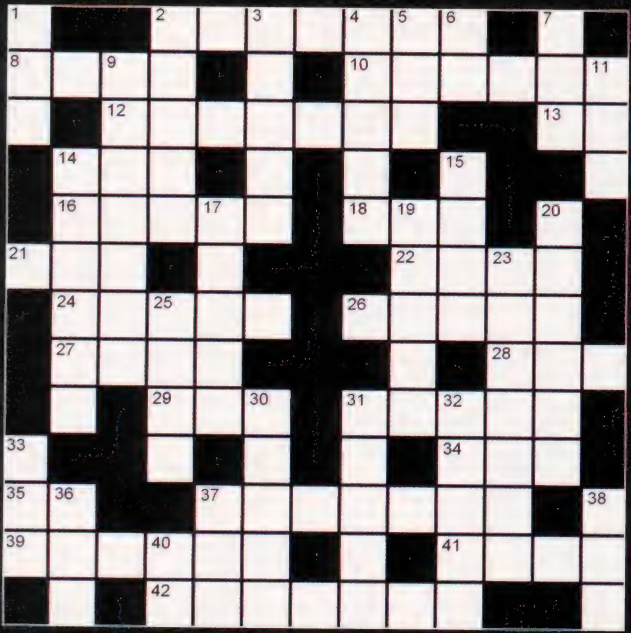
The terrible beepy renditions of Motley Crüe songs do seem to go with the terrible Motley Crüe pinball physics, but one reviewer raised a much more important issue: "*Crüe Ball* is a rockin', sockin' pinball game that knows the Crüe like no other videogame in history."

When your review's main point is that the game knows Motley Crüe better than all other game acquaintances of Motley Crüe, that's when you stop giving it a 7.0 and start subtracting seven points from the review score.

But forget about that. I wish science could somehow shrink me down so I could take an elevator through a human brain. Then I could pull the crazy alarm if somebody's keeping "Motley Crüe Trivia" on the same floor as "Reasons Why I'd Be a Good Pinball Game." I don't give a damn if you know Motley Crüe, game. I don't care if you were backstage at the Dr. Feelgood tour and had to dig your cyber underwear out of Vince Neil's puke—leave it off your video pinball résumé.

GHOSTS OF EGM PAST

(Solution on page 121)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ACROSS

2. *Shadow of the Colossus* foes
8. *Bible Adventures* star
10. Floppy-eared PlayStation platformer
12. April '04 *EGM* cover game
13. Online *Final Fantasy*
14. *Virtual On*'s Bal-_-Bow
16. Follows Zeus' *Altered Beast* order?
18. *Gauntlet* cast member
21. Xbox 360 Western
22. Sega's _ *Booga*
24. Monthly edition
26. *Burning Rangers* (Saturn) archenemy?
27. *Dance Dance Revolution* move
28. Xbox disc
29. *Tony Hawk* wall-plantable cash dispenser
31. Like *Tekken's* Kuma
34. Affirmative
35. PS1 "misspelled" puzzler, for short
37. Steals weapon
39. Japan, to the import scene
41. Sony handhelds
42. Sneaky kill in PS2 *Predator*

DOWN

1. *Crash Bandicoot* explosive crates
2. *Battle* (NES) or *Virtual* (N64)
3. Boots up
4. It's this or die in NES shredder title
5. Sony's Cooper
6. Highest score possible in *EGM*
7. Play *Punch-Out!!*?
9. Versus
11. Move right thumbstick in *Halo 2*
14. *Fight Night* battle scar?
15. Space invaders?
17. *Bonk's Adventure* volcano activity
19. *Italian Job* Charlie's girlfriend
20. *Mario Paint* backdrop
23. *Summoner* sequel
25. *SOCOM* subject
30. *Alone in the Dark 4* location
31. DS *Pokémon*
32. *Battle of Olympus* fairy
33. Ecco's right hand
36. Box-drawing coin-up
37. Pixel
38. DC *Phantasy Star*, for short
40. Sony's first console (abbrv.)

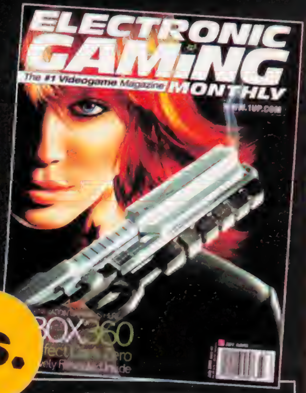
GRUDGE MATCH

Teacher takes on student

FREE VIDEO GAME TIP BOOKLET
ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY
ALL ABOUT NINTENDO SEGA · ATARI VIDEO GAMES Plus Computer Software and Arcade Games
May, 1989
OUR EXCLUSIVE NINTENDO PREVIEW
NINTENDO GAMES:
P.O.W.
OPERATION WOLF
1943
ULTIMA
ROBOCOP
BAD DUDES
BUMP-N-JUMP
BUBBLE BOBBLE
HYDLIDE
STRIDER
SUPER SPRINT
Plus Many More...
SPECIAL PICK-HIT PREVIEW...
MEGA MAN 2

EGM THEN

VS.


ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY
The #1 Videogame Magazine
WWW.1UP.COM
XBOX 360

EGM NOW

We know *EGM* has always melted your mind with the most comprehensive game coverage $5 to $6 can buy. But only the hardcore among you remember back when your favorite gaming mag had NES coverage, turquoise font treatments, and guys with mullets. Which *EGM*—past or present—brought more joy to everyone's stick?

COVERS	
Iron Sword featuring Fabio	Next-gen consoles, mostly **Advantage: EGM Now**
RUNNING FEATURES	
High scores your peers obtained in *China Warrior* (TG-16)	Afterthoughts, Industry Jobs **Advantage: EGM Now**
ADVERTISEMENTS	
Pilot turned game designer "Major Wild Bill" Stealey and lots of *Robocop* **Advantage: EGM Then**	Heck, some stuff's got nothing to do with games
REVIEW SCORES	
Mostly 7 to 10	Mostly 2 to 7
Advantage: Tie **(Hey, not our fault so many games blow.)**	
STAFF	
Shoe, Crispin Boyer	Shoe, Crispin Boyer **Advantage: EGM Now** **(They got sexier.)**
CONTEST PRIZES	
Secret Video Game Tricks video!!!	Game of the Month **Advantage: EGM Now** GAME OF THE MONTH
REVIEWS	
"I can't remember what this game was about." —Ed Semrad on the NES's *Hydlide*	"Aw, snap! Dat zombie game's *raw*, yo!" —Mark MacDonald on *Resident Evil 4* **Advantage: EGM Now**

WINNER: EGM NOW

Despite some awesome ads, old *EGM* just can't stack up to today's staff, content, or frequency of nearly nude pics. So we bid you adieu, old *EGM*. Then we bury you so deep in our backyards that God himself couldn't dig you up.

EGM RETRO: 200 ISSUES OF US

This month, we look back at the most important topic of all: EGM

After 200 rockin' issues, we thought we should take a break from commemorating the greatest games of the past and commemorate the greatest magazine of the past. Namely, us.

—Jeremy Parish

FREE VIDEO GAME TIP BOOKLET INSIDE!
U.S. National Video Game Team's
ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY
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OUR EXCLUSIVE NINTENDO PREVIEW
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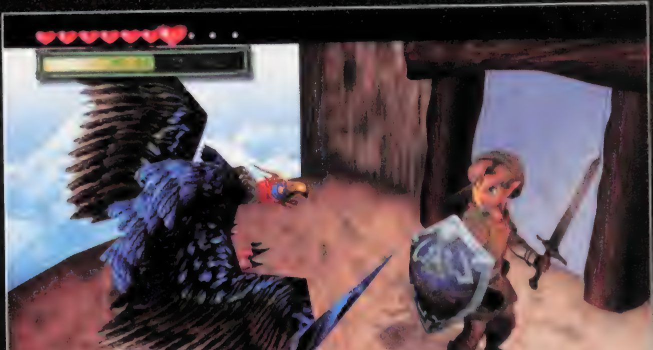
BUMP-N-JUMP
BUBBLE BOBBLE
HYDLIDE
STRIDER
SUPER SPRINT
BONUS! FC! "Mega Man" Poster In This Issue!
SPECIAL PICK-HIT PREVIEW...
MEGA MAN 2

In the Beginning...

EGM was forged in the crucible of 1989, when Nintendo's NES ruled all and 16-bit gaming was a mysterious but exciting cloud on the horizon. Gaming was pretty different back then. How different? Well, *Mega Man* games were still fresh and exciting enough to warrant a cover.

We were different back then, too. The three-man Review Crew format that we all know and love was nowhere to be seen in that first issue. Instead, a single reviewer weighed in on each game with a full-page critique. And forget about numbers in our scoring system—games were rated from "Direct Hit!" to "Miss!" (*EGM* #2 kicked off the four-man Review Crew and the 10-point-scale tradition. And half-point scores were introduced in *EGM* #69.)

But the *really* weird thing is that we briefly covered—believe it or not—PC games, including the LucasArts classic *Zak McKracken and the Alien Mindbenders* for the Commodore 64. Yes, C64. We told you it was a different era.



What a Joker

We've always been known for our April Fool's jokes, which are different from most people's pranks in that they're, like, awesome. And convincing: Some retailers began taking preorders for a *Twilight Princess*–style remake of *The Legend of Zelda: Wind Waker* (GC) that we completely made up (above). And people tried for years to get our Sheng Long trick in *Street Fighter II* to work—and it's probably no coincidence that secret world warrior Akuma bears more than a passing resemblance to the imaginary master we created for Ryu and Ken.

Everybody was Kung-fu Fighting

During the mid-'90s, we loved fighting games. A lot. In fact, from the first time we played *Street Fighter II* we couldn't stop talking about them. We have hard numbers, too. Between May 1993 and October 1995, no fewer than 18 covers were dedicated to fighting games—that's nearly two-thirds of our covers over the course of two years!

Will we ever be quite so obsessed with another format ever again? Since *DOA: Xtreme Beach Volleyball* failed to create its own genre, probably not.

***EGM*'s favorite fighting series (by number of cover appearances):**

1. *Street Fighter* (11 covers)
2. *Mortal Kombat* (10)
3. *Soul Calibur* (two)
3. *Tekken* (two) ➤

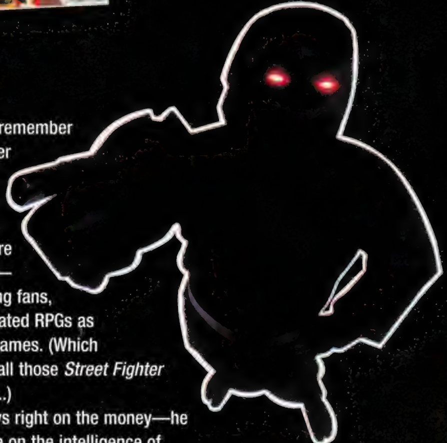
ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY
1990 VIDEO GAME BUYER'S GUIDE
1991 VIDEO GAME BUYER'S GUIDE
1990 CHRISTMAS PREVIEW
SUPER NES BUYER'S GUIDE
MARIO PARTY
SPIDER-MAN

EGM RETRO (CONT.)

The Authority on Strategies, Tricks & Arca
EGM²
First Hands-On!
GOLDENEYE 00
1st Strategy Anywhere!
MORTAL KOMBAT 4
Bonus!
Final Fantasy VII
Giant Fold-out World Map, Walk-Through & More!
Also Inside:
Felony 11-79 • Tetrisphere
Clock Tower • Ace Combat II
Disney's Hercules • Star Fox 64
Tekken 3

Spin-off Doctors

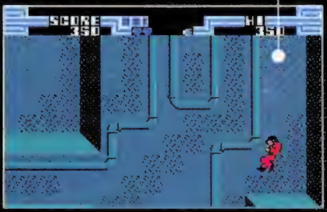
Back in the day, we devoted a hefty chunk of each magazine to strategy guides until readers insisted on more previews, reviews, news, and features—so we created *EGM2* to contain the bounty of our expert talents. It was eventually renamed *Expert Gamer*, which passed the torch along to *GameNOW* a few years later.



The Little Ninja Who Could

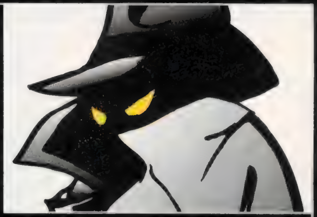
Longtime readers no doubt remember the most mysterious member of our Review Crew, the outspoken Sushi-X. He has moved along to new ventures, but Sushi's exploits are still recalled with fondness—except maybe by role-playing fans, since the outspoken ninja hated RPGs as much as he loved fighting games. (Which could probably account for all those *Street Fighter* and *Mortal Kombat* covers....)

Not that Sushi was always right on the money—he called the Game Boy "a joke on the intelligence of mankind" and predicted its imminent failure at the hands of Lynx and Game Gear. Oops. We sometimes butted heads with Sushi over his iconoclastic opinions, but when he was right he was dead-on, as with his scathing indictment of Acclaim's *Total Recall* for NES (which he summed up with an incisive "Total reject!").


SCORE 350
HI 350

Speaking of *Total Recall*, maybe the gaming industry hasn't changed all that much over the years after all. Acclaim threatened to pull its advertising in retaliation for our *TR* review. Fifteen years later, some publishers still think they can dictate our content and opinions, as current *EGM* Editor-in-Chief Dan "Shoe" Hsu mentioned just last issue.

Doin' the Things a Quarter Can



Quartermann is a long-standing stalwart of the *EGM* universe. While he's toned down his writing style over the years from his former glib, mouthy approach to rumormongering, he's never lost his knack for canny predictions. He called a 64-bit console from Atari back in 1991 (the "64-bit" Jaguar arrived three years later) and the portable Genesis-compatible Sega Venus in 1994 (it arrived a year later under the name Nomad). Long before that, The Q reported Sega's interest in acquiring the rights to *Madden NFL Football* for Genesis (a partnership which ultimately propelled both EA and Sega to impressive heights). The list goes on and continues to this day with shrewd prognostications such as "*Ridge Racer 6* will be on Xbox 360."

Of course, not everything Quartermann has predicted has come true—but you can hardly blame him, since it's not always his fault. For instance, rumors about the imminent release of the Wideboy (a device that enabled playing Game Boy software on a television long before the Super Game Boy came around) were well founded, but the device never made it to stores for various legal and financial reasons. And sometimes it's just as well that the Q-Mann's crystal ball is hazy, like when he predicts disasters as if he were gaming's Nostradamus. For instance, when he said, "A game based on rocker Bon Jovi? It may not be that far away...." A lucky break for us all.

BY THE NUMBERS

We've got issues

4562	Number of games that the Review Crew has seen in 200 issues
813	Number of games that Senior Editor Crispin Boyer, *EGM*'s longest tenured staffer, has reviewed
6	Number of full-time *EGM* editors who went on to make games
43,821	Number of times an *EGM* editor has been asked, "So, all you do for a living is play games?"

ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY
FINAL FANTASY X
GAMECUBE
HALO 2
MATRIX
MAXIMO
STATE OF EMERGENCY
GRAND THEFT AUTO
STUNTMAN
DRIVER 3
PHANTASY STAR ONLINE
55 BEST GAMES
LORD OF THE RINGS
METAL GEAR SOLID 3 SNAKE EATER
The Godfather
XBOX 360
PS3
TOP SECRETS
CASTLEVANIA
SCARFACE

NEXT MONTH: MARCH • ISSUE #201

ON SALE FEBRUARY 14

KINGDOM HEARTS II

Our exclusive ***Kingdom Hearts II*** cover story is packed with enough Disney madness that, if properly harnessed, could power 15,000 Main Street Electrical Parades. Hold on to your Mickey Mouse ears, Disney maniacs! We've got brand-new screens, the dish on the worlds Sora and co. will explore (here's a hint...oh, forget it...***Tron***!), the celebrities who give life to the characters, an interview with the game's creator, and our hands-on impressions of the game.

Then we'll talk with Reggie Fils-Aime, Nintendo's outspoken vice president, about the company's next-gen **Revolution**. You'll want to hear what this guy has to say about this Xbox 360 business and what ***Mario***'s house plans to bring gamers this year.

Also, many of you are well aware that the *EGM* staff has an infinite supply of answer-seeking missiles that are powered by truth and moxie. We'll find out why this newfangled next-gen **Xbox 360** console keeps having the same dab-blasted problems (long-ass loads, slowdown) we find with current-gen consoles.

We'll also deliver an exclusive interview with the creative minds behind the upcoming ***Silent Hill*** motion picture. The flick looks shockingly close to the source material, and this straight talk from Director Christophe Gans and Composer Akira Yamaoka will turn you into a believer.

All of this and lots more as we set our sights on Issue #300...that we'll be printing with robot lasers from the moon directly to the surface of your mind!

PREVIEWS

- Tomb Raider: Legend (XB360)
- X-Men 3 (XB360/PS2/XB)
- Stuntman 2 (PS2/XB)
- The Godfather (XB360/PS2/XB)
- Metal Gear Ac!d 2 (PSP)

REVIEWS

- Chibi Robo (GC)
- Age of Empires: The Age of Kings (DS)
- Dead or Alive 4: Dead Rising (XB360)
- Top Spin 2 (XB360)
- Black & White Creatures (PSP)

(All planned editorial content is subject to change.)

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ANSWERS TO GHOSTS OF EGM PAST

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ELECTRONIC GAMING MONTHLY (ISSN #1058-918X) is published monthly by Ziff Davis Media Inc., 28 East 28th Street, New York, NY 10016. Periodicals Postage Paid at New York, NY 10016 and additional mailing offices. For subscription service questions, address changes, or to order, please contact us at: Web: http://service.egmmag.com (for customer service) or http://subscribe.egmmag.com (to order); Phone: U.S. and Canada (800) 779-1174 or (850) 682-7624, elsewhere (303) 604-7445; **POSTMASTER**: Electronic Gaming Monthly, P.O. Box 55722, Boulder, CO 80322-5722 (please include your mailing label with any correspondence as it contains information that will expedite processing); Fax: U.S. and Canada (850) 683-4094, elsewhere (303) 604-0518; E-mail (please type your full name and the address at which you subscribe): subhelp@egmmag.com. Subscriptions: The one-year subscription rate is $24.97. Electronic Gaming Monthly is published monthly, with occasional exceptions: A special issue may count as a subscription issue, a combined or expanded issue may count as two subscription issues, and there may sometimes be an extra issue. Outside the U.S. add $16 per year for surface mail, U.S. funds only. Please allow 6-8 weeks before receiving your first issue as well as for any subscription changes to take place on an existing subscription. Back Issues: Back issues are $8 each in the US, $10 each elsewhere (subject to availability). Prepayment is required. Make checks payable to Electronic Gaming Monthly. Mail your requests to: Back Issues, Ziff Davis Media Inc., P.O. Box 53131, Boulder, CO 80322-3131. Mailing lists: We sometimes make lists of our customers available to mailers of goods and services that may interest you. If you do not wish to receive their mailings, please write to us at: Electronic Gaming Monthly, P.O. Box 55722, Boulder, CO 80322-5722. The editors and the publisher are not responsible for unsolicited materials. Without limiting the rights under copyrights reserved herein, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in, or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise), without the prior written notice of Ziff Davis Media Inc. Copyright © 2006 Ziff Davis Media Inc. All rights reserved. Electronic Gaming Monthly is a registered trademark of Ziff Davis Publishing Holdings Inc. Reproduction in whole or in part in any form or medium without express written permission of Ziff Davis Media Inc. is prohibited. For permission to reuse material from our publications or websites, or to use our logo, contact Ziff Davis Media's Rights and Permissions Manager, Olga Gonopolsky, at: permissions@ziffdavis.com or Ziff Davis Media Inc. 28 East 28th Street, New York, NY, 10016 Tel: (212) 503-5438, Fax: (212) 503-3560. For article REPRINTS and E-PRINTS, contact FosteReprints at Tel: (866) 879-9144. Visit www.fostereprints.com to obtain quotes and order reprints online. Electronic Gaming Monthly and EGM are trademarks of Ziff Davis Media Inc. TM and © for all other products and the characters contained therein are owned by the respective trademark and copyright owners. All materials listed in this magazine are subject to manufacturers' change and the publisher assumes no responsibility for such changes. The Canadian GST Registration number is 140496720 RT. Publications Mail Agreement No. 40009221. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to P.O. Box 503, RPO West Beaver Creek, Richmond Hill, ON L4B 4R6. Helpful cooking tip: Chewing gum while chopping onions will keep you from crying. If that doesn't work, well, you've got more issues than we do.

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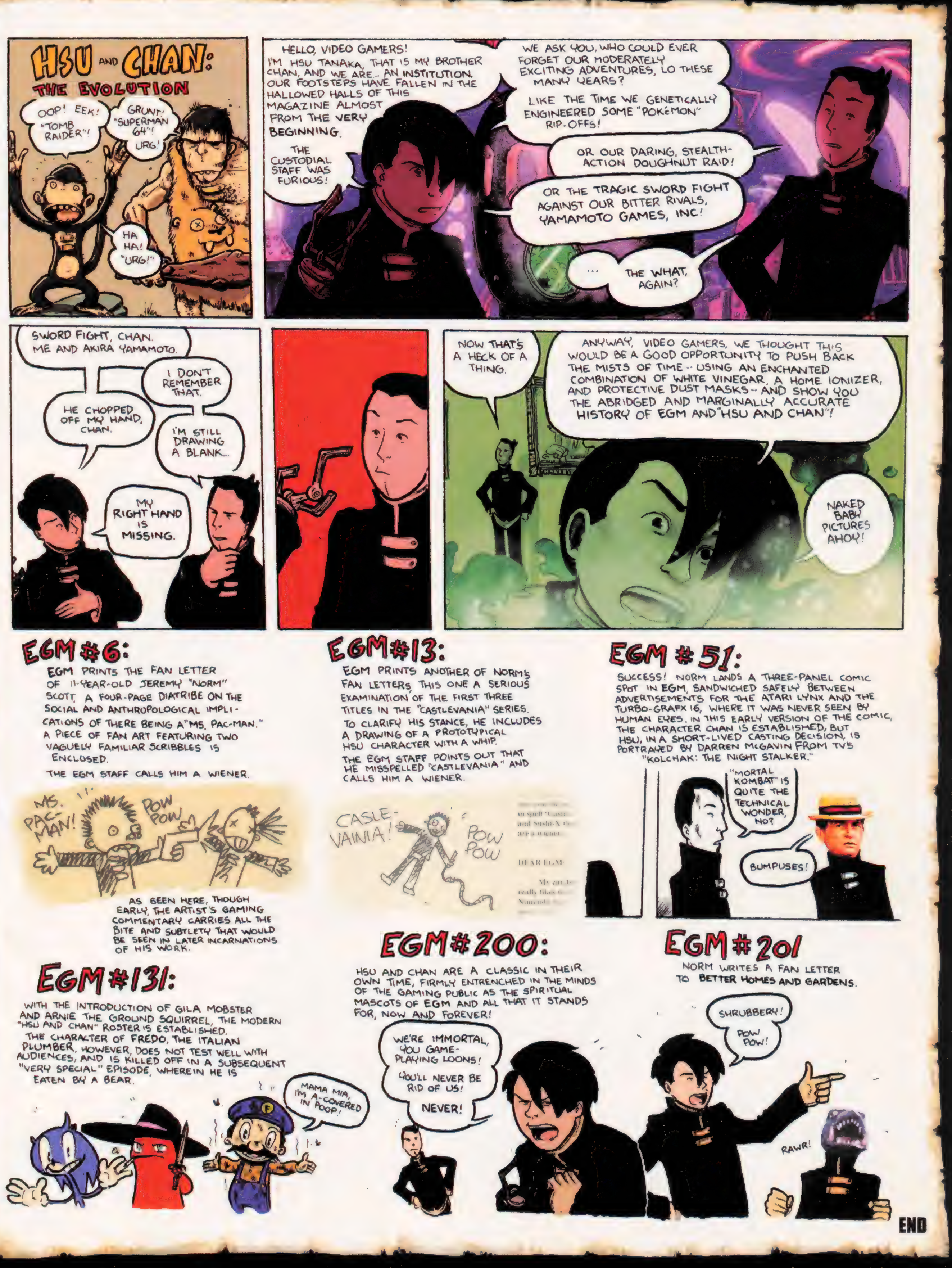
HSU AND CHAN: THE EVOLUTION
OOP! EEK! "TOMB RAIDER"!
GRUNT! "SUPERMAN 64"! URG!
HA HA! "URG!"
HELLO, VIDEO GAMERS! I'M HSU TANAKA, THAT IS MY BROTHER CHAN, AND WE ARE... AN INSTITUTION. OUR FOOTSTEPS HAVE FALLEN IN THE HALLOWED HALLS OF THIS MAGAZINE ALMOST FROM THE VERY BEGINNING.
THE CUSTODIAL STAFF WAS FURIOUS!
WE ASK YOU, WHO COULD EVER FORGET OUR MODERATELY EXCITING ADVENTURES, LO THESE MANY YEARS?
LIKE THE TIME WE GENETICALLY ENGINEERED SOME "POKéMON" RIP-OFFS!
OR OUR DARING, STEALTH-ACTION DOUGHNUT RAID!
OR THE TRAGIC SWORD FIGHT AGAINST OUR BITTER RIVALS, YAMAMOTO GAMES, INC!
...
THE WHAT, AGAIN?
SWORD FIGHT, CHAN. ME AND AKIRA YAMAMOTO.
I DON'T REMEMBER THAT.
HE CHOPPED OFF MY HAND, CHAN.
I'M STILL DRAWING A BLANK...
MY RIGHT HAND IS MISSING.
NOW THAT'S A HECK OF A THING.
ANYWAY, VIDEO GAMERS, WE THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE A GOOD OPPORTUNITY TO PUSH BACK THE MISTS OF TIME -- USING AN ENCHANTED COMBINATION OF WHITE VINEGAR, A HOME IONIZER, AND PROTECTIVE DUST MASKS -- AND SHOW YOU THE ABRIDGED AND MARGINALLY ACCURATE HISTORY OF EGM AND "HSU AND CHAN"!
NAKED BABY PICTURES AHOY!
EGM #6:
EGM PRINTS THE FAN LETTER OF 11-YEAR-OLD JEREMY "NORM" SCOTT, A FOUR-PAGE DIATRIBE ON THE SOCIAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THERE BEING A "MS. PAC-MAN." A PIECE OF FAN ART FEATURING TWO VAGUELY FAMILIAR SCRIBBLES IS ENCLOSED.
THE EGM STAFF CALLS HIM A WIENER.
MS. PAC-MAN!
POW POW
AS BEEN HERE, THOUGH EARLY, THE ARTIST'S GAMING COMMENTARY CARRIES ALL THE BITE AND SUBTLETY THAT WOULD BE SEEN IN LATER INCARNATIONS OF HIS WORK.
EGM #13:
EGM PRINTS ANOTHER OF NORM'S FAN LETTERS, THIS ONE A SERIOUS EXAMINATION OF THE FIRST THREE TITLES IN THE "CASTLEVANIA" SERIES. TO CLARIFY HIS STANCE, HE INCLUDES A DRAWING OF A PROTOTYPICAL HSU CHARACTER WITH A WHIP.
THE EGM STAFF POINTS OUT THAT HE MISSPELLED "CASTLEVANIA" AND CALLS HIM A WIENER.
CASLE-VAINIA!
POW POW
to spell "Cast
and Sushi-X th
are a wiener.
DEAR EGM:
My cat Je
really likes t
Nintendo
EGM #51:
SUCCESS! NORM LANDS A THREE-PANEL COMIC SPOT IN EGM, SANDWICHED SAFELY BETWEEN ADVERTISEMENTS FOR THE ATARI LYNX AND THE TURBO-GRAFX 16, WHERE IT WAS NEVER SEEN BY HUMAN EYES. IN THIS EARLY VERSION OF THE COMIC, THE CHARACTER CHAN IS ESTABLISHED, BUT HSU, IN A SHORT-LIVED CASTING DECISION, IS PORTRAYED BY DARREN McGAVIN FROM TV'S "KOLCHAK: THE NIGHT STALKER."
"MORTAL KOMBAT" IS QUITE THE TECHNICAL WONDER, NO?
BUMPUSES!
EGM #131:
WITH THE INTRODUCTION OF GILA MOBSTER AND ARNIE THE GROUND SQUIRREL, THE MODERN "HSU AND CHAN" ROSTER IS ESTABLISHED. THE CHARACTER OF FREDO, THE ITALIAN PLUMBER, HOWEVER, DOES NOT TEST WELL WITH AUDIENCES, AND IS KILLED OFF IN A SUBSEQUENT "VERY SPECIAL" EPISODE, WHEREIN HE IS EATEN BY A BEAR.
MAMA MIA, I'M A-COVERED IN POOP!
EGM #200:
HSU AND CHAN ARE A CLASSIC IN THEIR OWN TIME, FIRMLY ENTRENCHED IN THE MINDS OF THE GAMING PUBLIC AS THE SPIRITUAL MASCOTS OF EGM AND ALL THAT IT STANDS FOR, NOW AND FOREVER!
WE'RE IMMORTAL, YOU GAME-PLAYING LOONS!
YOU'LL NEVER BE RID OF US!
NEVER!
EGM #201
NORM WRITES A FAN LETTER TO BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS.
SHRUBBERY!
POW POW!
RAWR!
END

So if you let other people, piece by piece, make you into what they want, even if it's stupid, what happens to you?

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